TOKYOPOP
BLADE OF HEAVEN
8
STORY BY
KYUNG-IL YANG
ART BY
YONG-SUK WON

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Manga
Action/Fantasy
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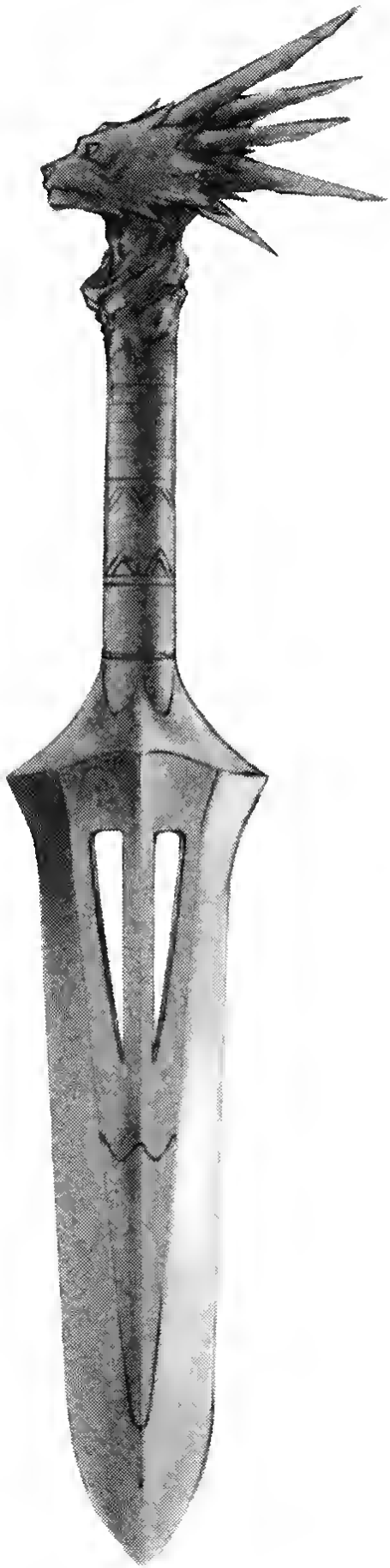
BLADE OF HEAVEN™

The *Blade of Heaven* saga continues as Sachunsa, a petty thief, realizes he is the reincarnated legendary warrior, Soma. When he takes on a quest to retrieve the heart of the Human Face Fire Dragon in order to save a girl from certain death, this quest may be his first—and his last!



PREVIOUSLY IN

BLADE OF HEAVEN

AS PRINCESS AADDMEE AND HER COMPANIONS VALIANTLY ATTEMPTED TO FEND OFF THE GATEWAY GAUARDIANS, SOMA FOUGHT A PITCHED BATTLE AGAINST THE VISCOUS KAY, WHO DESPERATELY COVETED THE CHUNWANGSHIN SWORD. WHEN SOMA FELL OFF THE CLIFF INTO THE RAGING WATERS BELOW, KAY BELIEVED HE HAD WON. BUT IT SEEMS THAT SOMA MAY HAVE ELUDED THE FINALITY OF DEATH...

SOME TIME LATER, A RASCALLY THIEF NAMED SACHUNSA FINDS HIMSELF ESCORTING A MUTE PAINCESS ACROSS DANGEROUS TERRITORY ON A DESPERATE MISSION. INCREASINGLY, IT BECOMES CLEARER THAT SACHUNSA AND SOMA HAVE MORE IN COMMON THAN AN ACERBIC WIT...

UMM...
...!
WHERE AM...?
THAT'S RIGHT...! I'VE BEEN KIDNAPPED!

WIPE THAT DROOL FROM YOUR BEAK, DUMBBELL!!
YOU'RE DRIPPING IT ON THE MEAT, FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD!!
...?
NOW'S MY CHANCE! I'LL SLIP OUT WHILE THEY'RE DISTRACTED!
HEY!! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
WHEW...
?
NO... THESE ARE...
...BODIES OF THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY!
NO...IT'S ALL TRUE! THE SNAIL PROVINCE BANDITS...
...THEY REALLY DO EAT... PEOPLE!!

HEY...SPEAK NO EVIL! JUST WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE CREEPING OFF TO?
LOOK, I AIN'T NOBODY'S GATEKEEPER, SO GO IF YOU WANT...BUT IT'S POURING BUCKETS OUT THERE, SO YOU MAY AS WELL STAY HERE AND GRAB A BITE.
...?
!
꽝

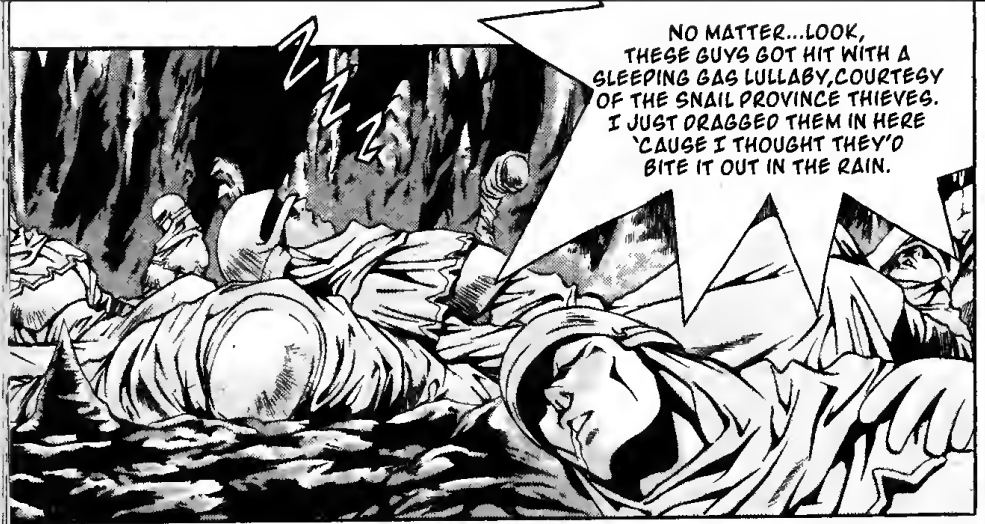
WHAT THE...WHAT THE HELL'S WRONG WITH YOU?!
IS THIS SOME KINDA FREAKY FEMININE THING?!
IS THIS ONE OF THEM, WHAT 'CHOO CALL IT, "HOT FLASHES"?!
EEEE...
...EEEE
MAN...CAN I MEET AT LEAST ONE CHICK THAT DOESN'T END UP ON HER BACKSCREAMING IN TERROR...?
쏴 아 아 아 아
철 퍽

I...
I'M CLOSE...!
I CAN FEEL IT...!

IF I WAS GONNA PUT YA ON A SPIT, THEN WOULD I HAVE GONE TO THE TROUBLE OF SAVING YA FROM DROWNING IN THE FIRST PLACE?!

WHAT KINDA GUY DO YOU THINK I AM?

WHAT?! YOU THOUGHT WHAT?! THAT I ATE PEOPLE?! HAW HAW HAW!! THAT'S RICH!!


NO MATTER...LOOK, THESE GUYS GOT HIT WITH A SLEEPING GAS LULLABY, COURTESY OF THE SNAIL PROVINCE THIEVES. I JUST DRAGGED THEM IN HERE 'CAUSE I THOUGHT THEY'D BITE IT OUT IN THE RAIN.

LOOK, AS FASCINATING AS CANNIBALISM IS, PROPER DINNER CONVERSATION IT AIN'T. ENOUGH WITH THE STRANGE THOUGHTS, AND JUST EAT SOME OF THIS MEAT!
THE RAIN IS REALLY STARTING TO POUR, SO WE NEED TO GATHER OUR STRENGTH AND GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE IT STARTS FLOODING...SO HERE. PUT SOME OF MY MEAT IN YOUR MOUTH... ER, THAT DION'T COME OUT RIGHT...

THIS...BOY...IF HE WERE INTERESTED IN THE TREASURE...
...HE WOULD HAVE SIMPLY CUT THE ROPE BRIDGE AND KILLED THE SOLDIERS. HE COULD HAVE EASILY TAKEN THE PALANQUIN THEN!

I GET A STRANGE VIBE FROM HIM... SOMETHING ABOUT HIS APPEARANCE...
ZZZ ...
ZZZ ...

WELL, WELL... SACHUNSA, WAS IT?

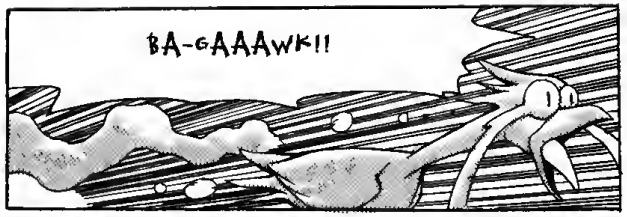
?
CHAR-YUKSAN!

ENJOY THAT MEAL WHILE YOU CAN... BECAUSE IT'S YOUR LAST!
PANT ...
HUFF ...
HUFF ...

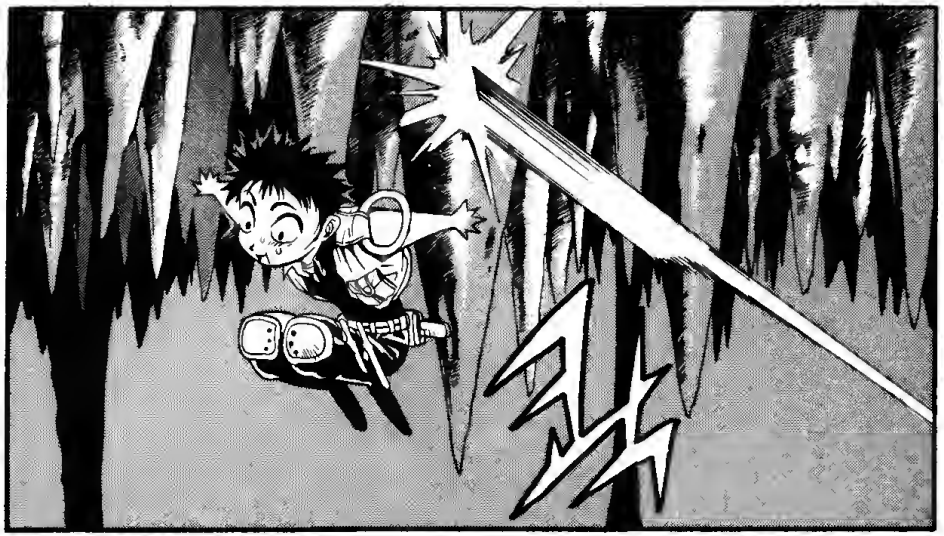
HMM...?

PREPARE TO DIE, THIEVING RAT!!

OF

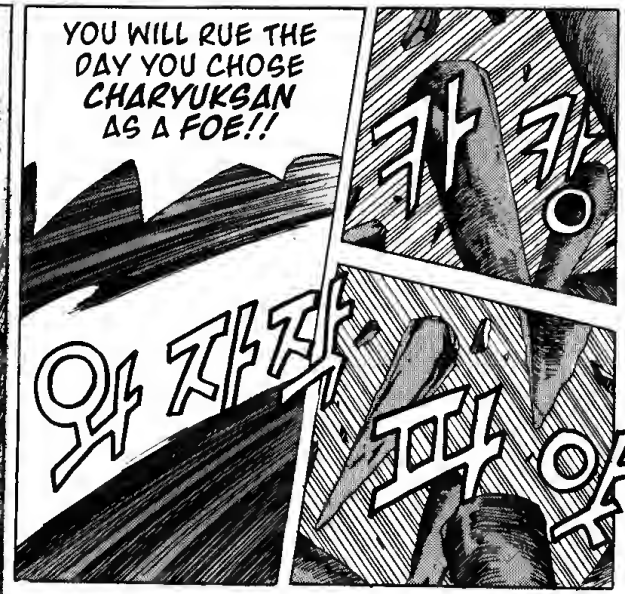

BA-GAAAWK!!

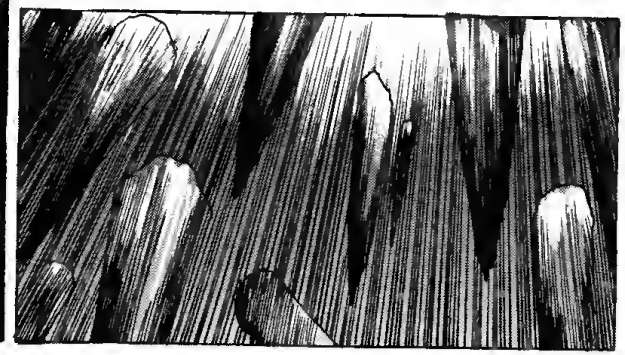
FOOL!! NO ONE ESCAPES THE INVINCIBLE JAVELIN!!

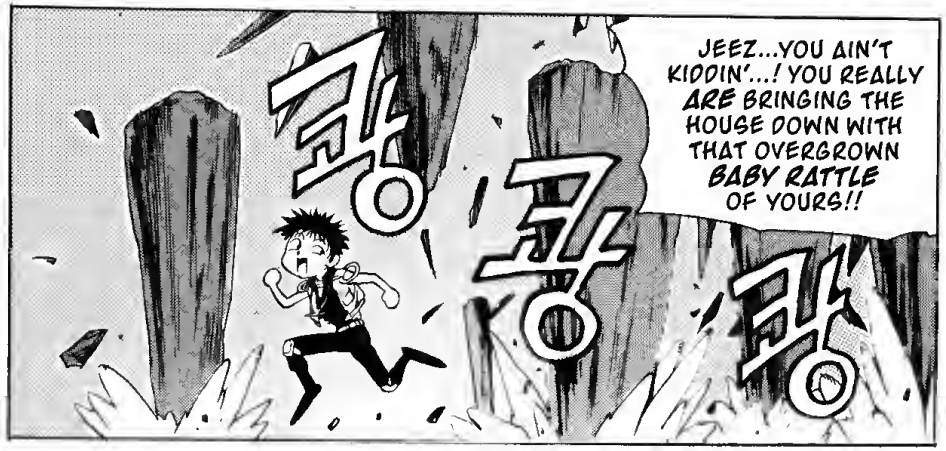


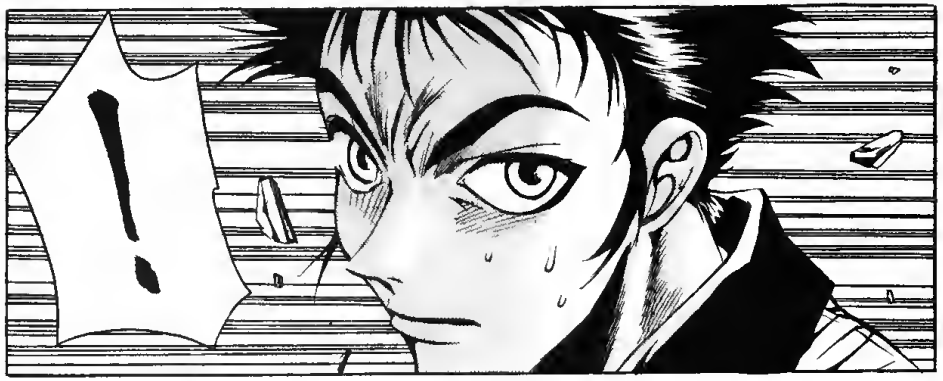
OH YEAH?! THEN WHAT DO YOU CALL WHAT I JUST DID, CHUCKLES?!

INSOLENT WHELP!! YOU WILL DIE BY MY HAND!!
I WILL TEAR THIS CAVE APART BEFORE I LET YOU ESCAPE!!


YOU WILL RUE THE DAY YOU CHOSE CHARYUKSAN AS A FOE!!




JEEZ...YOU AIN'T KIDDIN'...! YOU REALLY ARE BRINGING THE HOUSE DOWN WITH THAT OVERGROWN BABY RATTLE OF YOURS!!



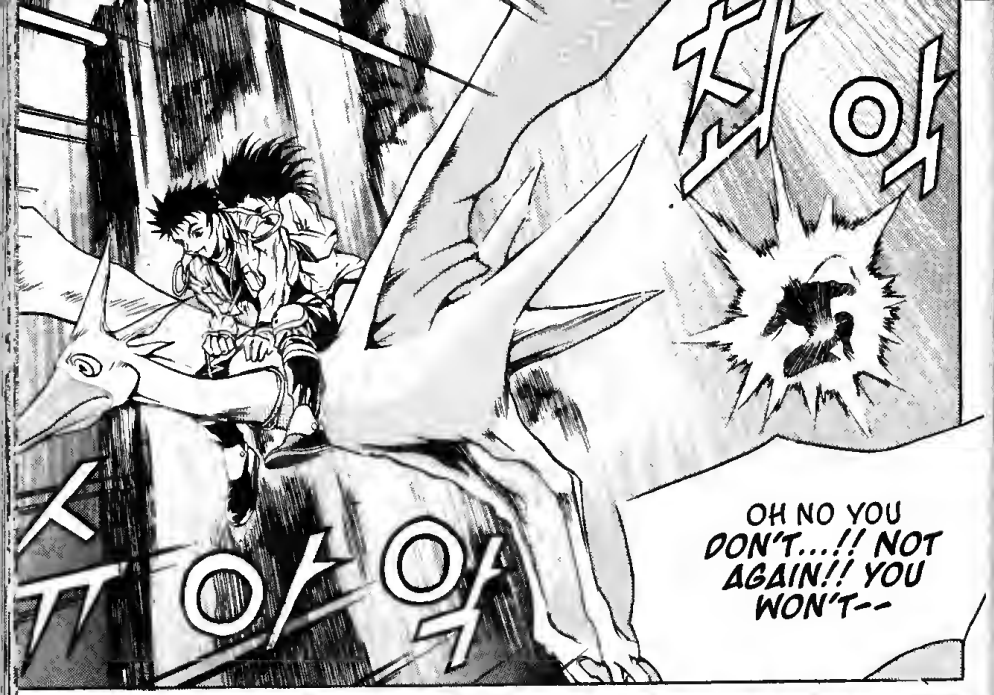
SILENCE, BOY! YOUR INSOLENCE TOWARDS THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY HAS ENSURED YOUR DEATH!!

WAIT A SEC! IS THIS ABOUT THAT BROAD?! 'CUZ IF IT IS, THEN TAKE HER ALREADY!

PAL...YOU KEEP THIS UP, YOU'RE GONNA MAKE ME SORE!
OH, YOU'LL BE MORE THAN SORE...WHEN I'M FINISHED, EVERY ONE OF YOUR NERVE ENDINGS WILL CRY OUT IN AN ORGASM OF PAIN!!

WHAT...?!
COMMANDER!!
AHH!

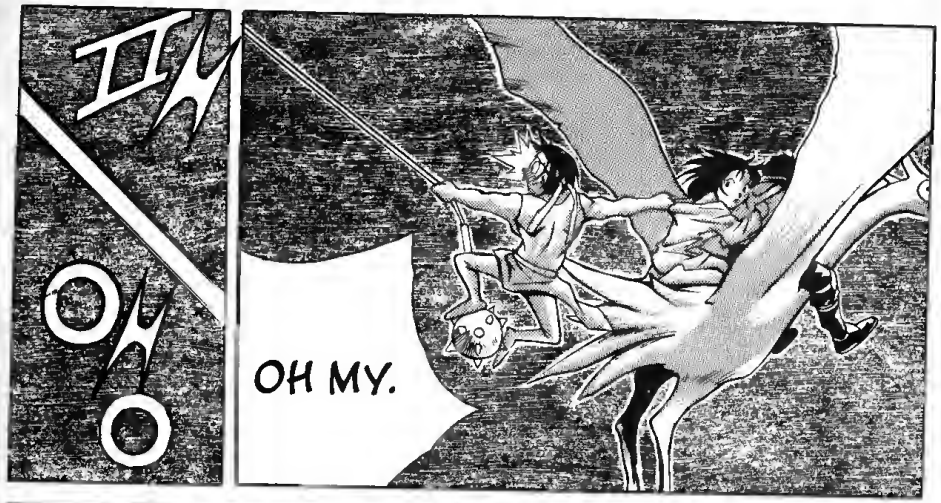
WHAT THE HELL--?! MY HAIR!!
AS FUN AS THAT "NERVE ORGY" THING SOUNDS, I GOTTA CATCH YA NEXT TIME, CHIEF!
ONE THING YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ME...AS UGLY AND DUMB AS YOU ARE... I'M EQUALLY AS LUCKY! TOODLES, CAVEMAN!
OOH!! THAT LITTLE BASTARD!!


OH NO YOU DON'T...!! NOT AGAIN!! YOU WON'T--

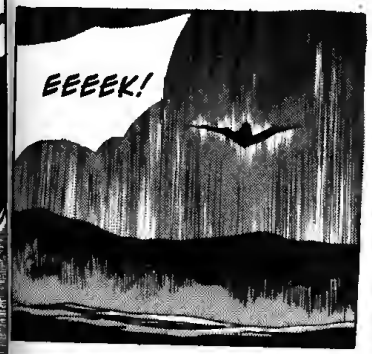
--ESCAPE ...? OH CRAP.
MUSTN'T FALL...!

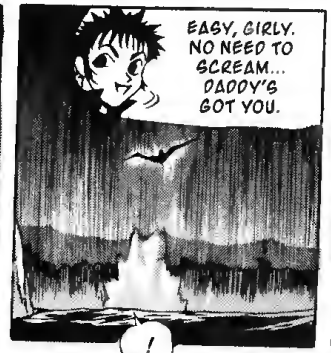
GOTCHA!!

JUST...A LITTLE...
...BIT...
MORE...


OH
OH
OH MY.

?

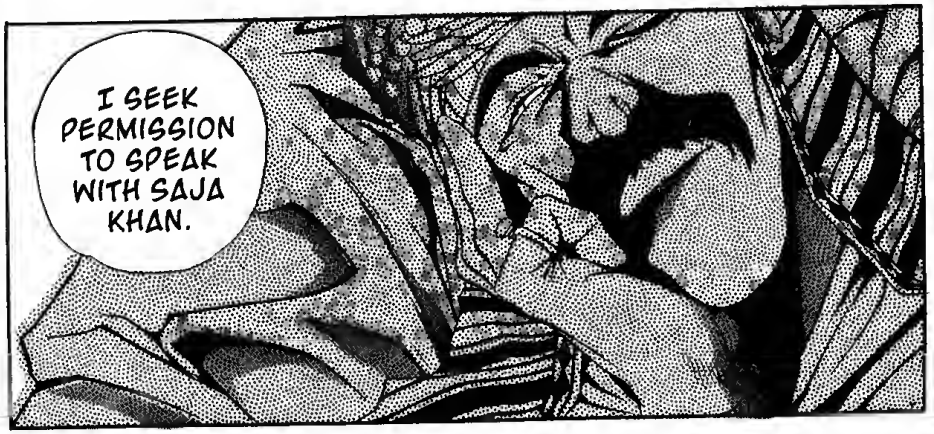

EEEEK!


EASY, GIRLY. NO NEED TO SCREAM... DADDY'S GOT YOU.
!

AIIEE!
OKAY, NOT DADDY... UNCLE, THEN?
GYAAAH!

THAT SOUND... BELLS...?
IT WAS SURELY THE COMMANDER'S SIGNAL FOR ME NOT TO FOLLOW...
BUT WHY?
WHY... WOULD THE COMMANDER ...?
NO MATTER. WHATEVER THE REASON, I VOW TO PERSONALLY WRING YOUR NECK, SACHUNSA!!
?
GURK!

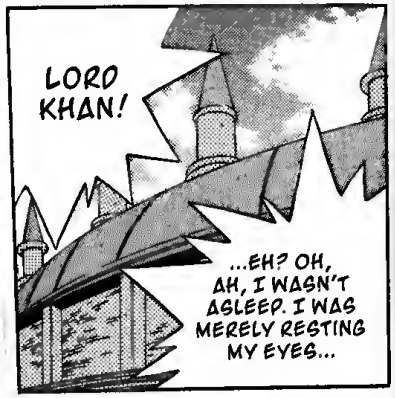
WE DESERVE OUR RIGHTFUL PUNISHMENT OF DEATH FOR NOT PROTECTING THE COMMANDER!
WE WILL PAY FOR THAT ABOMINATION WITH OUR LIVES!
ENOUGH, ENOUGH!
SO... CHARYUKSAN WILL NOT RETURN UNTIL HE RESCUES THE COMMANDER, EH?
HEH HEH...!
WE HAD NO CHOICE! WE RETURNED ALONE TO REPORT TO YOU, OH MIGHTY SAJA KHAN...!!

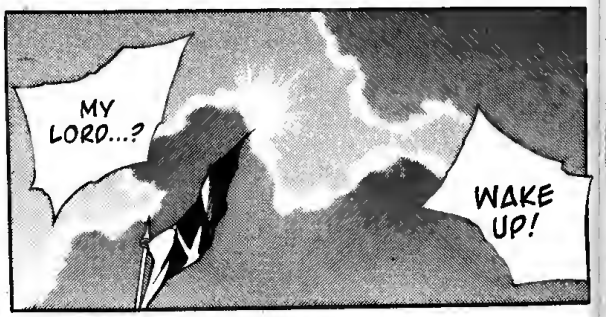

I SEEK PERMISSION TO SPEAK WITH SAJA KHAN.

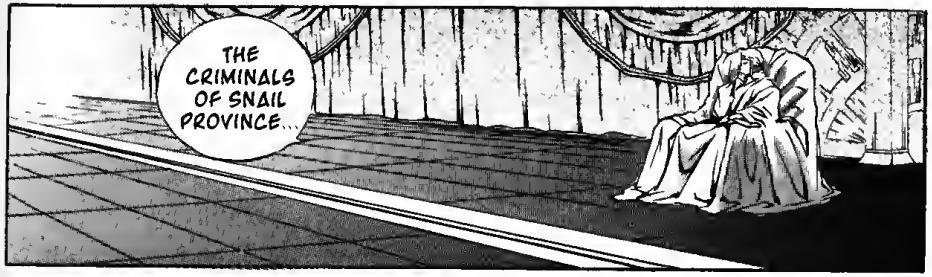
MY LORD...IF YOU GIVE ME THE FIVE GREAT GENERALS AND THE TROOPS UNDER THEIR COMMAND, I WILL ANNIHILATE THE CRIMINALS FROM SNAIL PROVINCE!!
A BIT PREMATURE, WOULDN'T YOU SAY? LISTEN...SHE'S A BIG GIRL. SHE CAN TAKE CARE OF HERSELF.

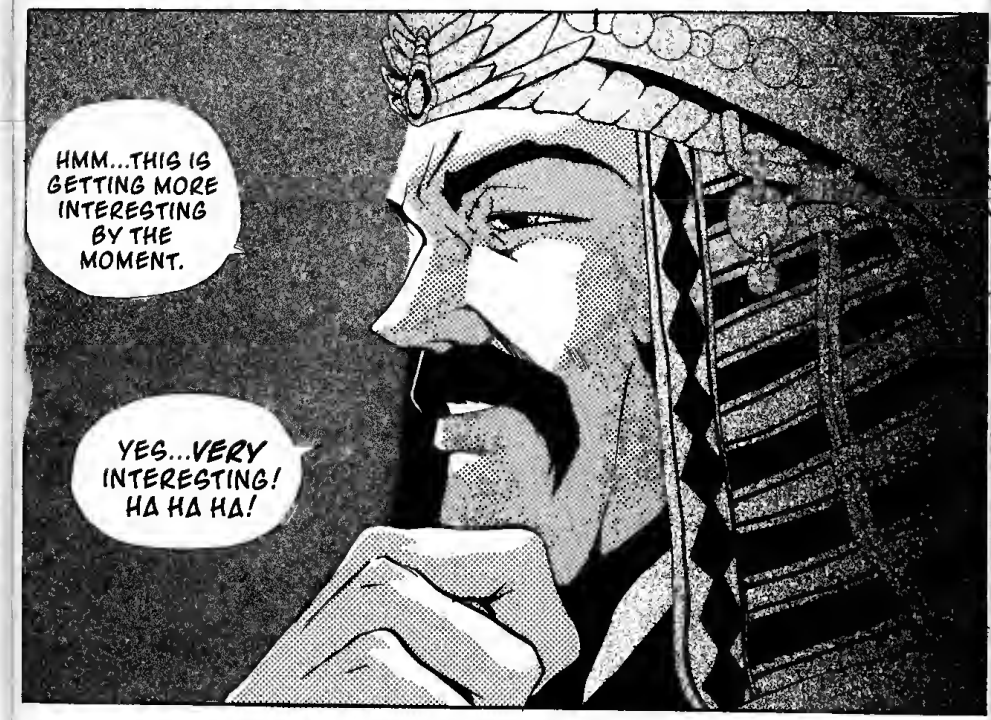
B-BUT...THE COMMANDER IS YOUR ONLY BLOOD KIN...

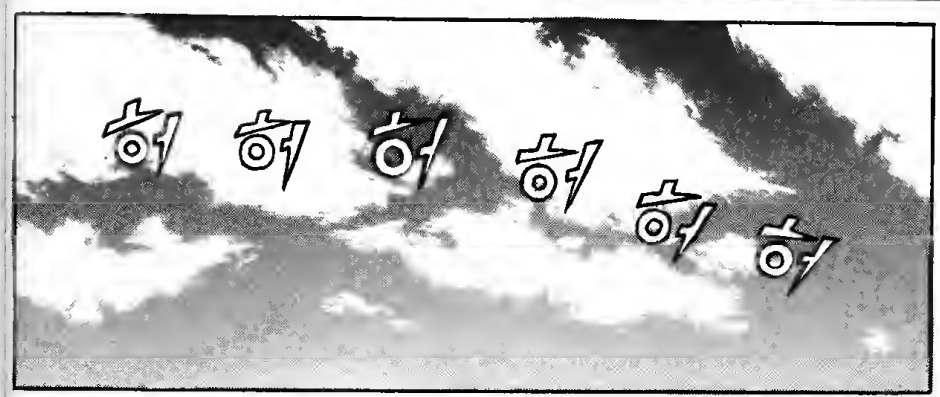
ZZZ


LORD KHAN!
...EH? OH, AH, I WASN'T ASLEEP. I WAS MERELY RESTING MY EYES...


MY LORD...?
WAKE UP!


THE CRIMINALS OF SNAIL PROVINCE...


HMM...THIS IS GETTING MORE INTERESTING BY THE MOMENT.
YES...VERY INTERESTING! HA HA HA!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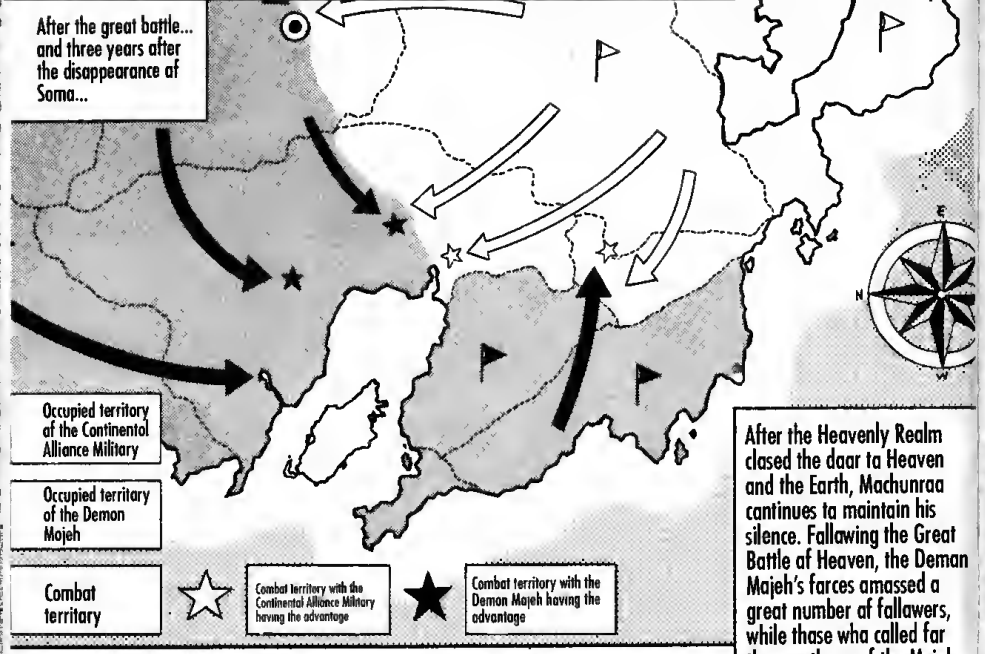
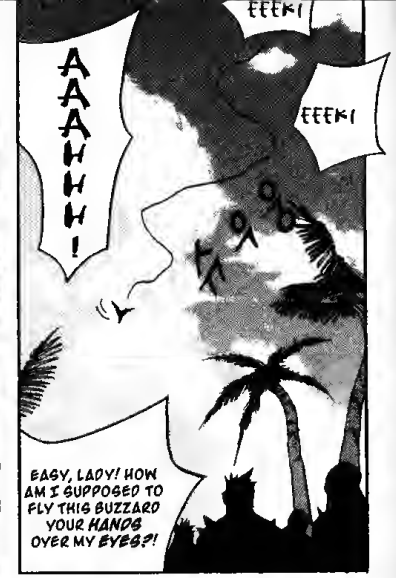


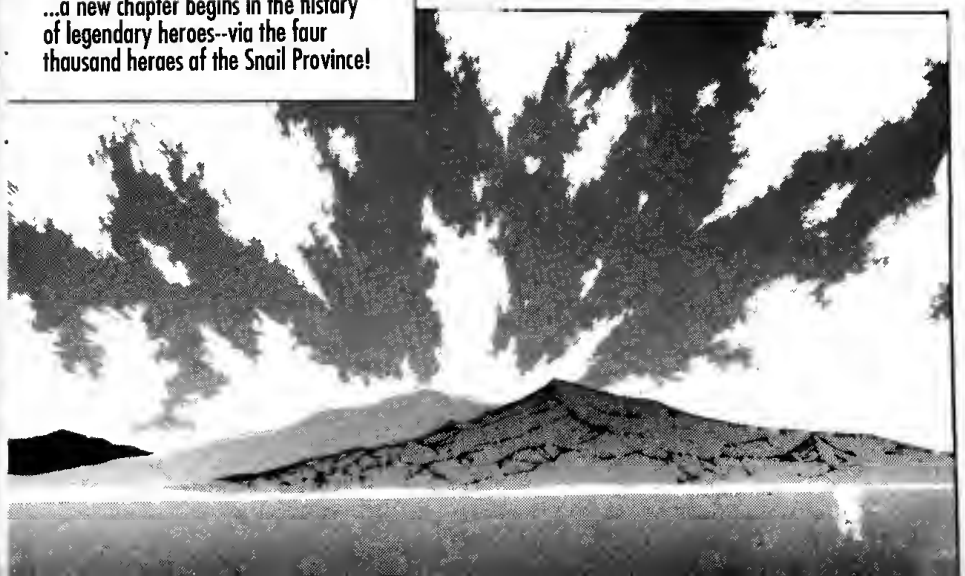
After the Heavenly Realm closed the door to Heaven and the Earth, Machunroo continues to maintain his silence. Following the Great Battle of Heaven, the Demon Majeh's forces amassed a great number of followers, while those who called for the overthrow of the Majeh formed the Continental Alliance Military around a central figure of leadership, Soja Khan...also known as **the Spirit of the Meadows.**

In the midst of the war between the two sides, a group of criminals from the last island of the South (the Snail Province), appeared.

In that place, Soma is reborn into a new body. He is now known by a different name--**Sachunsa!**



...a new chapter begins in the history of legendary heroes--via the faur thausand heraes af the Snail Province!



BLADE OF HEAVEN

LONG TIME NO SEE, BROTHER.

FOR TEN LONG YEARS I HAVE WAITED FOR THIS MOMENT...AND NOW, THE FATEFUL DAY HAS COME...
THE TIME FOR WORDS ARE OVER.
I CONCUR, BROTHER. MY STEEL WILL BE MY TONGUE.

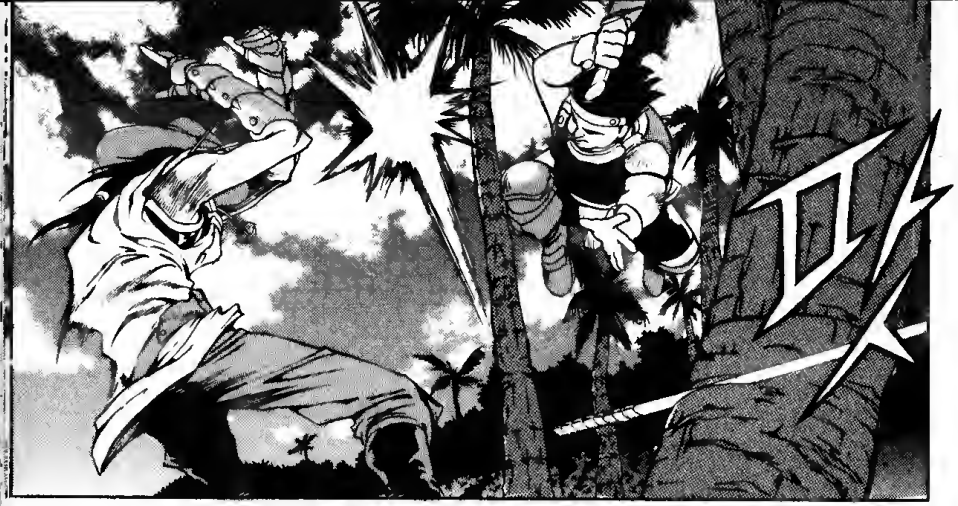
AT FIRST I TOOK PITY ON YOU BECAUSE YOU WERE MY YOUNGER BROTHER...BUT NO MORE! YOU BROUGHT THIS UPON YOURSELF!!

WHA...WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT WHOLE, "THE TIME FOR WORDS IS OVER," BUNK?! AND I BROUGHT THIS UPON MYSELF?! PLEASE! YOU ARE THE SNAKE THAT HAS TRIED TO SWITCH OUR INTENDED DESTINIES FROM THE MOMENT THE UMBILICAL CORD WAS SEVERED!

ドゥ

HA HA! HOW DO YOU LIKE MY QUICK TURN TECHNIQUE?! IT'S SOMETHING IMPOSSIBLE TO DO ON THOSE CHUBBY STUBS YOU CALL LEGS!!
WHAT THE--?!

!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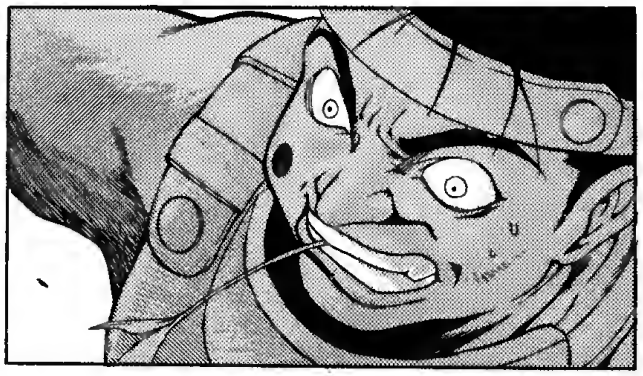

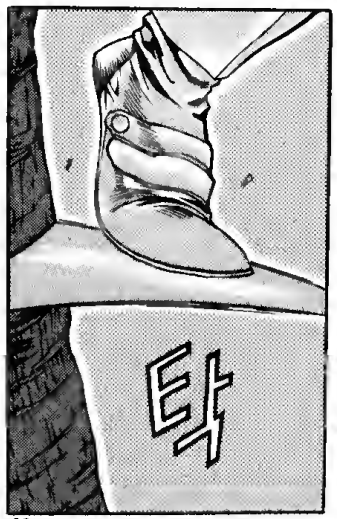
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IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO STOP THIS!
카강

HA! I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD BE OFFERING A WAY OUT!!
피융

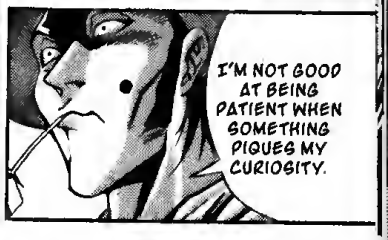
TODAY, I WILL UNVEIL THE TRUTH AND PUT AN END TO...EH?
AH!
AH!
AH
AH
AH

AAACKK!
콰 콰 콰 콰

COUGH! HACK! WH...WHAT WAS THAT...?!
COUGH! THERE'S TOO MUCH DUST TO SEE...!

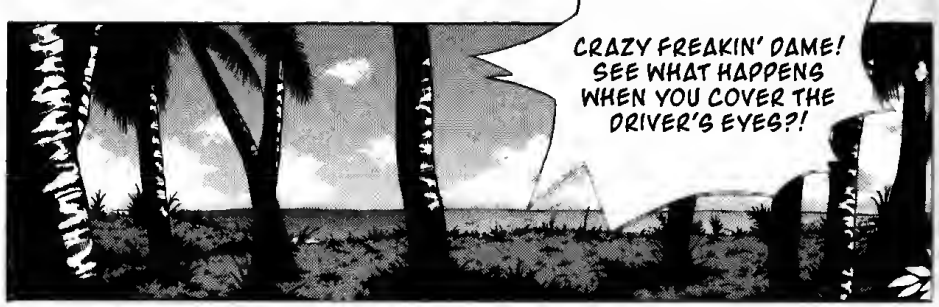
WHAT-EVER IT IS...

...MAYBE WE SHOULD HOLD OFF ON OUR MATCH.


I'M NOT GOOD AT BEING PATIENT WHEN SOMETHING PIQUES MY CURIOSITY.

SAME GOES FOR ME, YOUNGER BROTHER...!

NEVER FEAR! I WILL GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS MYSTERY!
NOT A CHANCE! I'M FIRST!!
다 다 다 다

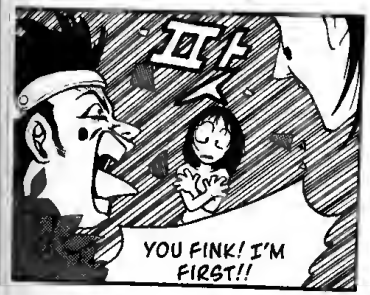

CRAZY FREAKIN' DAME! SEE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU COVER THE DRIVER'S EYES?!

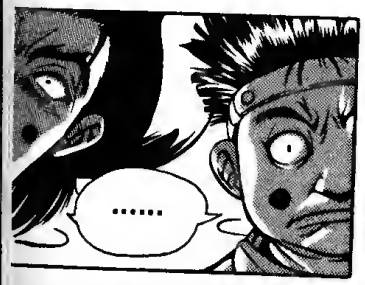
THOSE VOICE...!

BECAUSE OF YOU, I GOT A BANANA UP MY CORN CHUTE!

I'M FIRST!
찻찻찻
NO WAY! WHO SAYS?!

I FOUND IT!


YOU FINK! I'M FIRST!!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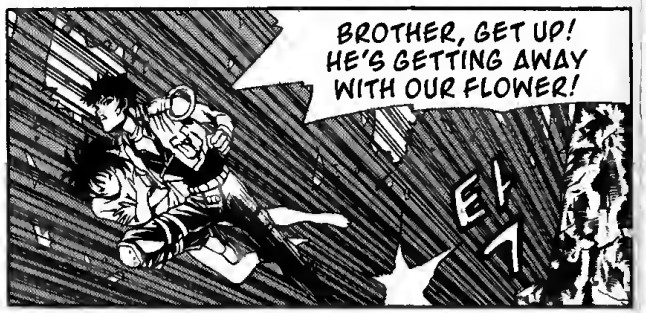
LOOK...YOU CAN COME ON OUT! I GIVE A FLIP IF YOU HAVE CLOTHES ON OR NOT!
YOU DON'T HAVE ANYTHING I HAVEN'T ALREADY PEEKED AT WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING!

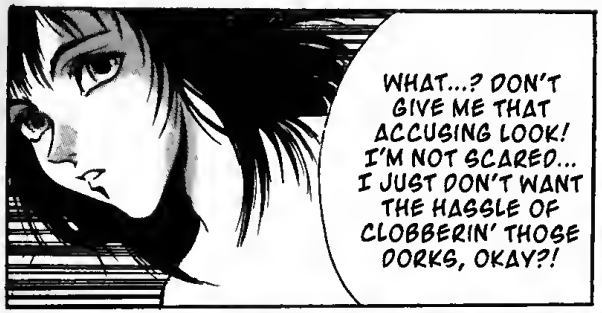
A...WO...A WO-WO...A WO-WO-WO...
WOMAN...

F-FINALLY, SPRINGTIME HAS COME FOR US!
SPRINGTIME!!

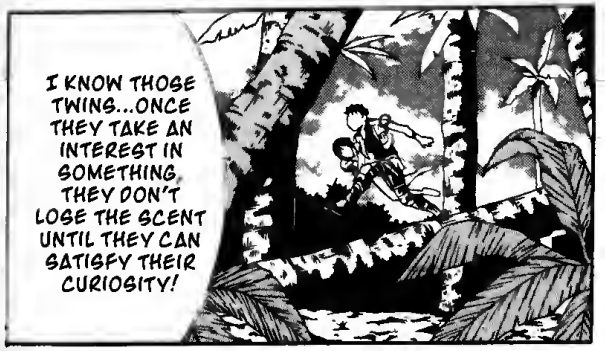
GREAT...TWO BOOBS STARING AT BOOBIES.
HUH?! I KNOW YOU...! YOU'RE SA---


BROTHER, GET UP! HE'S GETTING AWAY WITH OUR FLOWER!

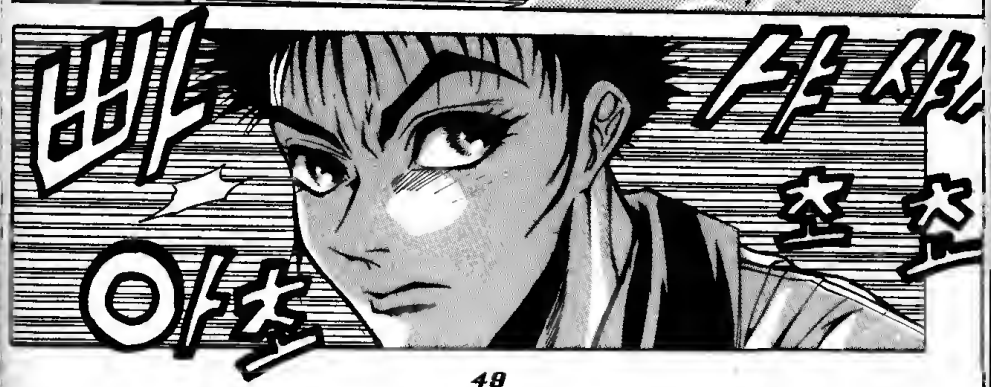
COME BACK HERE, YOU JACKAL! MY CURIOSITY WILL BE QUENCHED!
YEAH! COME BACK AND FIGHT, COWARD!

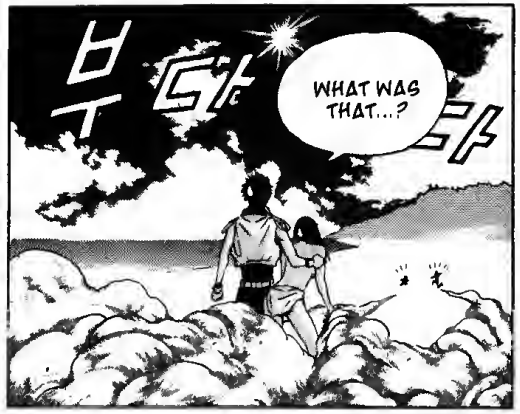

WHAT...? DON'T GIVE ME THAT ACCUSING LOOK! I'M NOT SCARED... I JUST DON'T WANT THE HASSLE OF CLOBBERIN' THOSE DORKS, OKAY?!

IT'S TO THE POINT NOW WHERE THEY'RE AT WAR WITH ONE ANOTHER...OVER WHO WAS BORN FIRST!

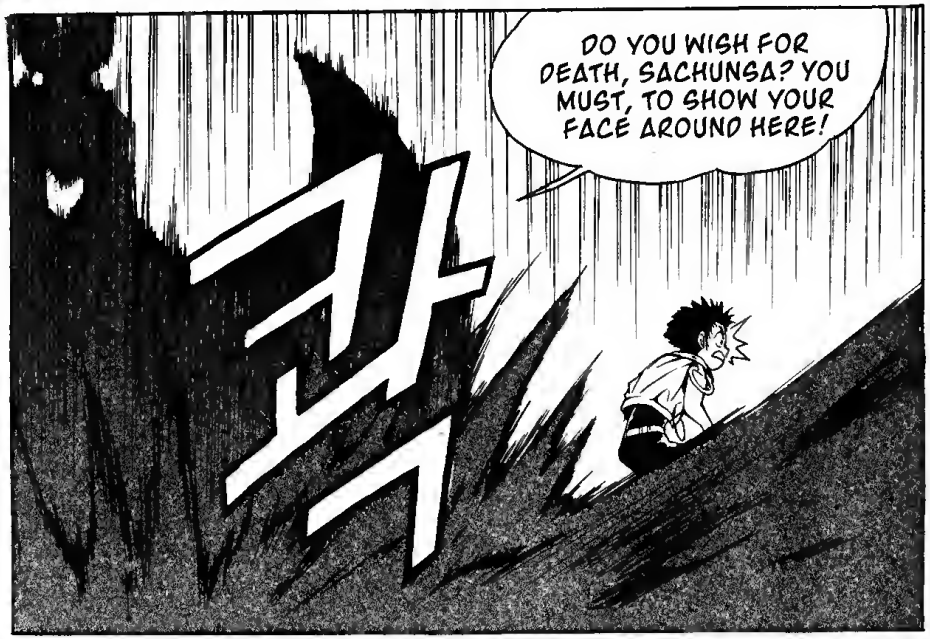

I KNOW THOSE TWINS...ONCE THEY TAKE AN INTEREST IN SOMETHING, THEY DON'T LOSE THE SCENT UNTIL THEY CAN SATISFY THEIR CURIOSITY!

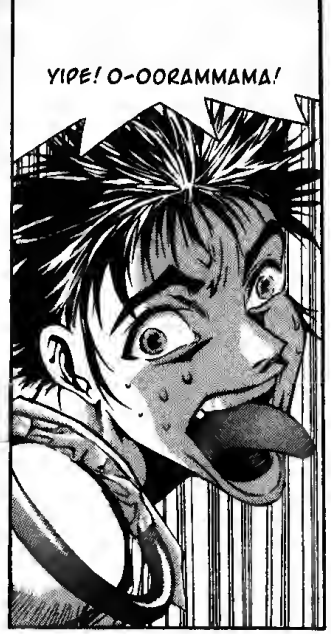
THE GODS SAY THAT WHOEVER CATCHES UP TO THEM FIRST IS THE OLDER BROTHER!
WHAAAT?! NO FAIR!! YOU JUST MADE THAT UP BECAUSE YOU'RE IN THE LEAD!!

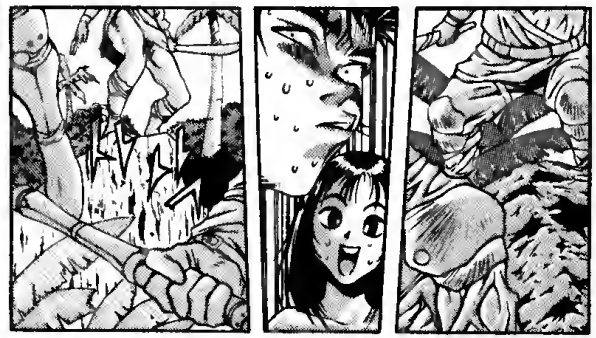




The two bull-headed brothers have forgotten the reason why they are running so fast.

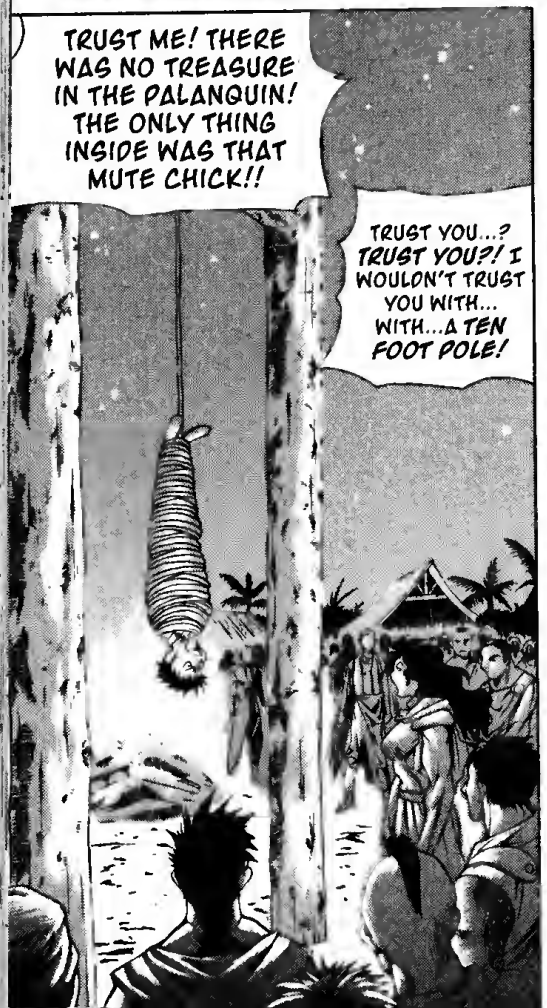






BLADE OF HEAVEN

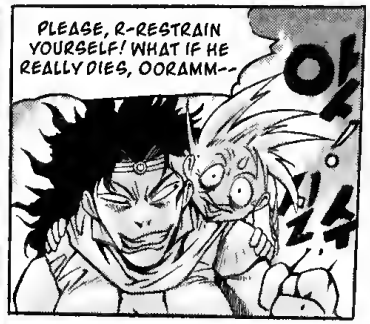
BUT I'M NOT LYING! THERE WAS NO TREASURE FROM THE START!
LIAR! DIRTY, FILTHY, LIARY LIAR!


TRUST ME! THERE WAS NO TREASURE IN THE PALANQUIN! THE ONLY THING INSIDE WAS THAT MUTE CHICK!!
TRUST YOU...? TRUST YOU?! I WOULDN'T TRUST YOU WITH... WITH...A TEN FOOT POLE!

A TEN FOOT POLE...? THAT MAKES NO SENSE WHATSOEV--

--EEEER!!

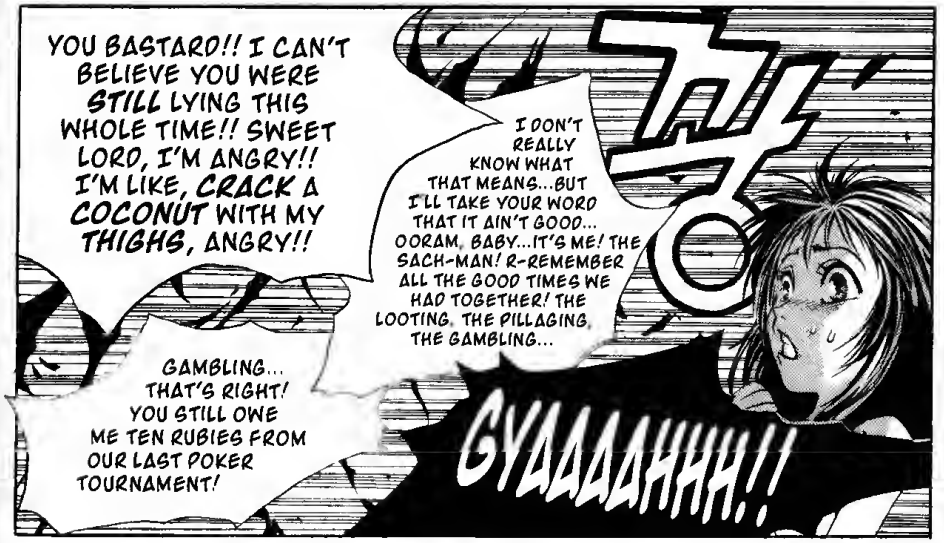
NOW IF YOU DON'T START SPILLING YOUR GUTS... WELL, I'M GONNA START SPILLING YOUR GUTS!!
IF THEY KEEP THAT UP...HE'LL DIE FOR SURE...!
YIIEE! DON'T TWIST THAT!


PLEASE, R-RESTRAIN YOURSELF! WHAT IF HE REALLY DIES, OORAMM--

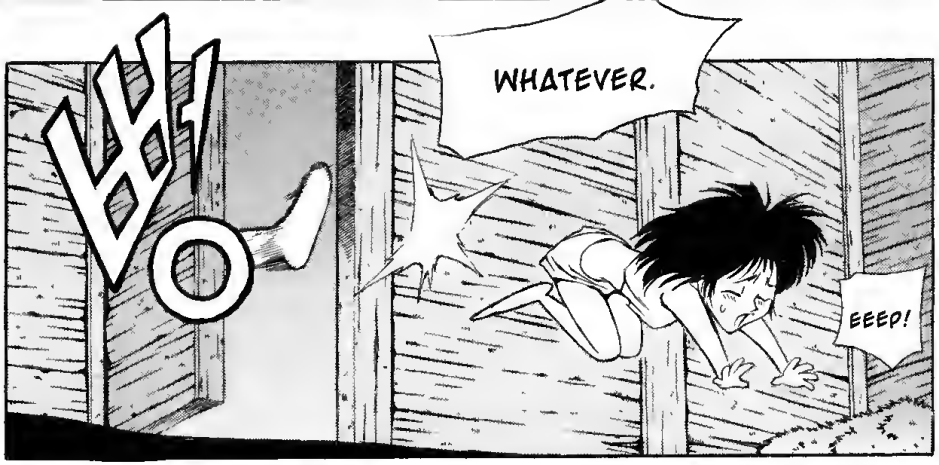
ARGH!
NOW EVEN THE OLD COOTS ARE BETRAYING ME!

W-WAIT...! ALL THE THINGS THAT HE'S SAYING... IT'S ALL TRUE.

WH-WH-WHAT?! I THOUGHT YOU SAID SHE WAS MUTE! LAST I CHECKED, THOSE SOUNDS FLYING OUT OF HER PIEHOLE ARE WHAT WE SIMPLE FOLK CALL WORDS!!!
UH...W-WELL...TH-THAT IS...


YOU BASTARD!! I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU WERE STILL LYING THIS WHOLE TIME!! SWEET LORD, I'M ANGRY!! I'M LIKE, CRACK A COCONUT WITH MY THIGHS, ANGRY!!
GAMBLING... THAT'S RIGHT! YOU STILL OWE ME TEN RUBIES FROM OUR LAST POKER TOURNAMENT!
I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS...BUT I'LL TAKE YOUR WORD THAT IT AIN'T GOOD... OORAM, BABY...IT'S ME! THE SACH-MAN! R-REMEMBER ALL THE GOOD TIMES WE HAD TOGETHER! THE LOOTING, THE PILLAGING, THE GAMBLING...
GYAAAAHHH!!

I SAID STOP IT!
I MAY LOOK LIKE SOME COMMON PEASANT, BUT I'M THE COMMANDER OF THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY AND THE ONLY BLOOD KIN TO SAJA KHAN!
WHAT DID YOU JUST SAY?
THE COMMANDER OF THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY? AND SAJA KHAN'S DAUGHTER...?!
N-NO... I MEAN... HOO BOY...!
WELL, LITTLE GIRL, I DON'T KNOW UNDER WHAT PRETENSES YOU HAVE COME HERE...BUT REST ASSURED, YOU'LL GET YOUR TURN AFTER I FINISH TEACHING THIS LITTLE SKID MARK A LESSON! HEH HEH HEH!
AND YOU...! YOU DARE REVEAL OUR LOCATION BY BRINGING A SPY FROM THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY?!
N... NO! I... ACK!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, NO?! TRAITOROUS DOG!!
AAAAHHH!!
TAKE THAT!
LEG RIP!
SMASHING WATERMELON!
SURE, IT MAY BE TEMPTING TO KILL ME... BUT THE REPERCUSSIONS OF THAT ACTION WILL BE DIRE.
..?
?
WELL, WELL...THERE WAS TREASURE AFTER ALL...
SO THE TREASURE OF THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY...IS A WEE LITTLE LASS, HMM?
THAT'S RIGHT! IF YOU TAKE ME AS YOUR HOSTAGE, YOU CAN GET GOLD AND TREASURES FROM THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY IN EXCHANGE FOR MY LIFE... BUT IF YOU TAKE MY LIFE...
...YOU MUST PREPARE YOURSELF FOR A LONG, BLOODY WAR AGAINST THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE FORCES--WHO WILL FIGHT TO AVENGE MY DEATH!

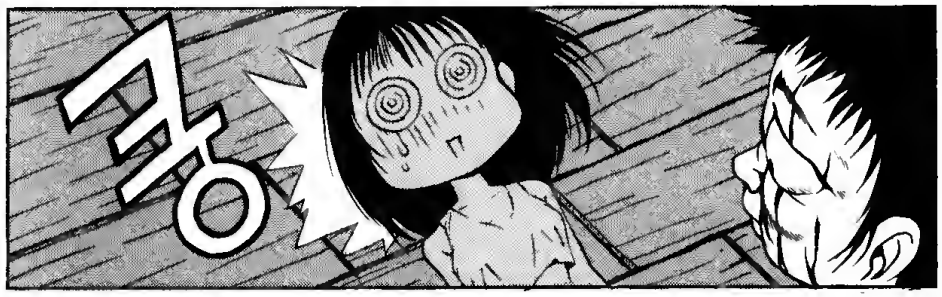

WHATEVER.
EEEP!

AND DON'T THINK FOR A MINUTE THAT YOUR EMPTY THREATS HAVE SUCCEEDED, EITHER! I'M MERELY KEEPING YOU IN HERE UNTIL I MAKE UP MY MIND!

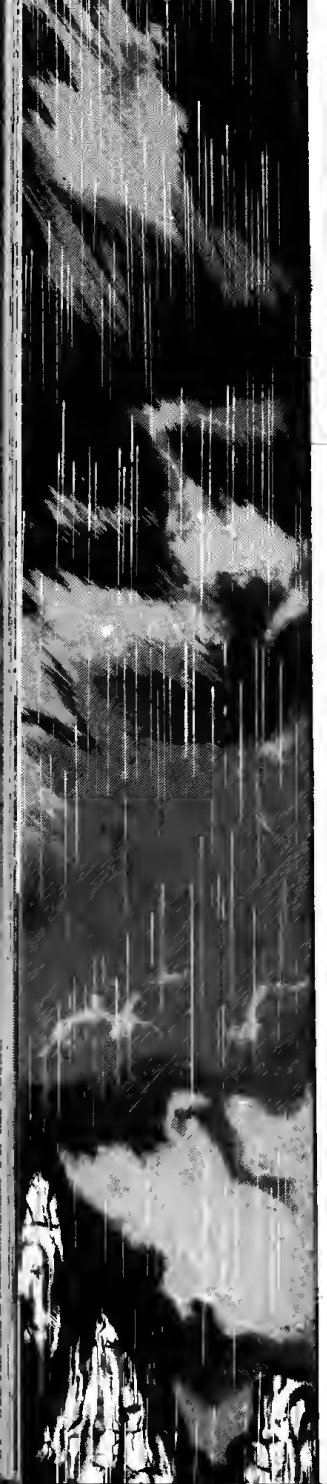
DON'T MIND HER.

SHE GETS THAT WAY WHEN HER JOCK STRAP'S TOO TIGHT.
HUH...? WH-WHO ARE YOU...?!

WHY, IT'S ME-- SACHUNSA.
GAAAH!



AGAIN WITH THE FAINTING! GIRLIE, YOU REALLY WILL BE MUTE IF YA KEEP THUMPIN' YER MELON LIKE THAT!



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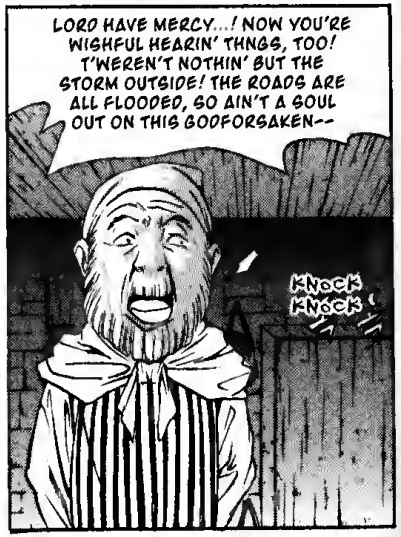
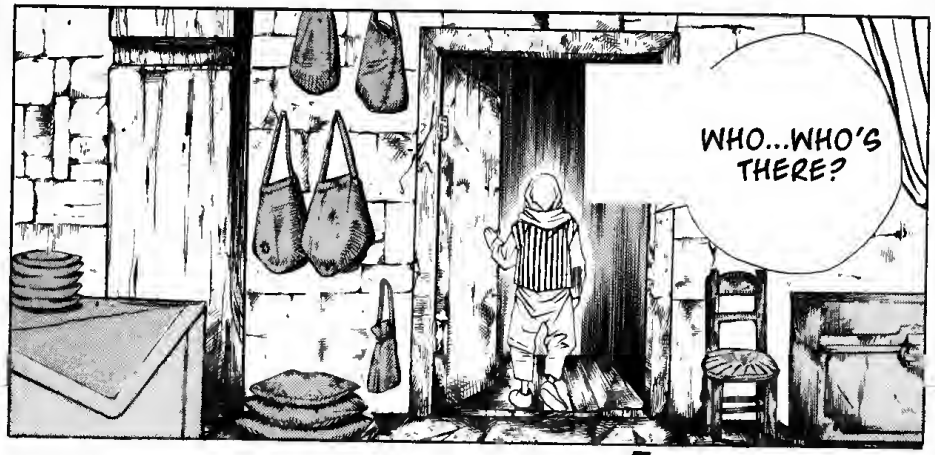
AW, STOP YER BAWLIN', WOMAN!
DO YOU REALLY THINK MAKING ALL THAT FUSS'LL BRING HIM BACK HOME ANY SOONER?!
H-HUH... SNORT!

DID...DID YOU JUST HEAR SOMETHING?


LORD HAVE MERCY...! NOW YOU'RE WISHFUL HEARIN' THNGS, TOO! T'WEREN'T NOTHIN' BUT THE STORM OUTSIDE! THE ROADS ARE ALL FLOODED, SO AIN'T A SOUL OUT ON THIS GODFORSAKEN--
KNOCK KNOCK


WHO...WHO'S THERE?

THAT'S STRANGE... UNLESS...OH LORD. SOME OF THAT WOMAN'S CRAZY IS RUBBIN' OFF ON ME!

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I'M SORRY... I'VE LOST ME WAY...

SONNY!! YOU'VE FINALLY COME BACK HOME!!
YER OLD GRANNY KNEW YOU'D RETURN! YES INDEEDY...I KNEWS IT! SOB...HIC!
?
WOMAN, ARE YOU OUTTA VER DAD BLAME MIND?! AND QUIT HUMPIN' THAT POOR MAN'S LEG! YOU AIN'T NEVER SEEN THIS FELLER BEFORE!!
COME ON IN AND YER GRANNY'LL FIX YA SOME VITTLES!
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IT'S A SAD WORLD WE LIVE IN, YESSIR. EVEN IN THESE HERE MOUNTAINS, ALL YOU HEAR IS THE DEMON MAJEH THIS THE DEMON MAJEH THAT... AND IF YOU'RE A RICH MAN YOU CAN HAVE MORE THAN PORRIDGE FOR BREAKFAST, LUNCH AND DINNER

THE ONLY THING FOUND IN ABUNDANCE THESE DAYS IS PAIN. Y'SEE, ALL THE YOUNG FOLK RUN AWAY A LONG TIME AGO... EVER SINCE OUR GRANDSON RAN AWAY, MY WIFE ONLY SEES HIS FACE. THAT'S WHY SHE THOUGHT YOU WERE ..Y'KNOW. I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND...
HMM...HAVE... SOME MORE PORRIDGE, SONNY...MMM....
YEP, AS YOU CAN SEE IT'S RAINY SEASON IN THESE HERE PARTS. IF ONE'S NOT CAREFUL, A STORM CAN CREEP UP ON YA AND DROWN YA DEAD, YESSIR.
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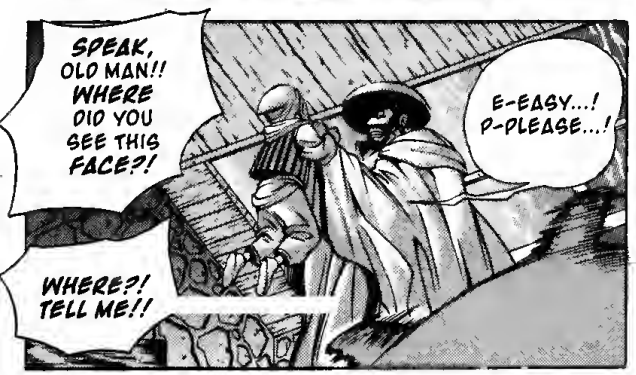
I BE SEARCHIN' FOR SOMEONE.
SOMEONE ...?
THAT'S ALSO THE REASON WHY THIS HERE PLACE AIN'T VISITED BY OUTSIDERS AS MUCH. A MAN THAT TRAVELS HERE THIS TIME OF YEAR AIN'T HERE BY ACCIDENT. NO SIR...THAT'S A MAN WITH A PURPOSE, YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT.
YOU WOULDN'T BY CHANCE BE A'WHITTLIN' THAT SOMEONE INTO THAT THERE PIECE OF WOOD, WOULD YA?

WHAT? HAVE YOU SEEN SOMEONE WITH THE SAME FACE AS THIS WOODEN FIGURE'S?!


SPEAK, OLD MAN!! WHERE DID YOU SEE THIS FACE?!
E-EASY...! P-PLEASE...!
WHERE?! TELL ME!!

I-I DIDN'T....GAK... I DIDN'T EVEN GET A CLEAR LOOK AT YER C-CARVIN'! H-HOW C-CAN I...HURK...!

I-I...I APOLOGIZE. I JUST...I JUST GOT CARRIED AWAY...
DAGNABIT, BOY! YER CAIN'T BE A'TUGGIN ON OLD FOLKS IN SUCH A WAY! YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT'LL SHAKE LOOSE...! AND FROM THE SQUISHINESS OF MY SHORTS, I THINK SOMETHING DID...

LORDY... ALL RIGHT, THEN. FORK IT ON OVER AND I'LL TAKE A PROPER LOOK.

ER...THAT BE THE CROTCH YOU'RE LOOKIN' AT.

C-CROTCH...? OF C-COURSE! HEH! I KNEW IT ALL ALONG!

.....

WHICH WAS THE CROTCH AGAIN...?

...ALL I'M SAYIN' IS YOU SHOULDN'T BE GITTIN' ALL ANGRY AT ME! I'VE HAD POOP THAT WAS MORE RECOGNIZABLE IN A LINE-UP...!

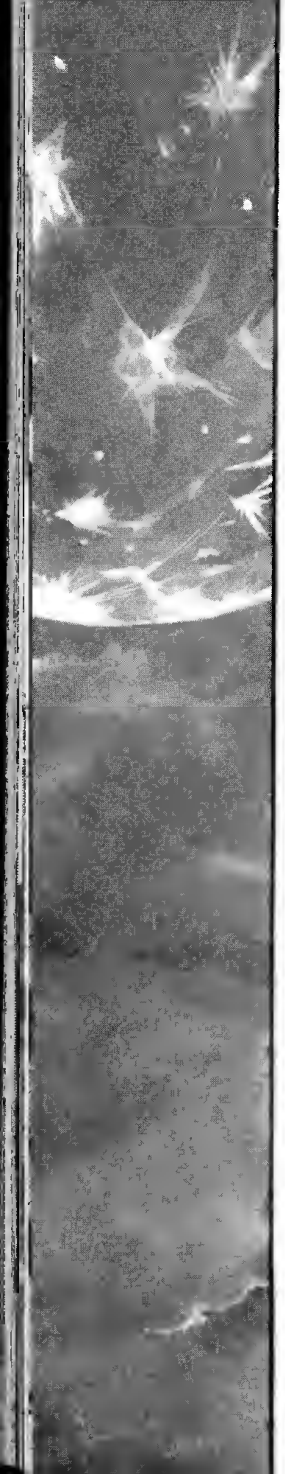
CARVIN' JUST AIN'T YOUR TALENT, IS ALL. TELL ME... HAVE YA TRIED WATER PAINT?

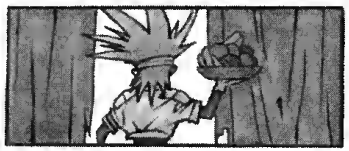
WELL...I'LL TAKE THAT SILENCE AS A NO. YEAH...COUGH...SO...THIS IS AWKWARD, HUH? H-HEY--SINCE THAT FIGURINE MEANS SO MUCH TO YOU, I BET THERE'S A GOOD REASON WHY, RIGHT?

AYE...THIS BE A CARVIN'... OF MY DAUGHTER.
MY BELOVED DONG DONG.

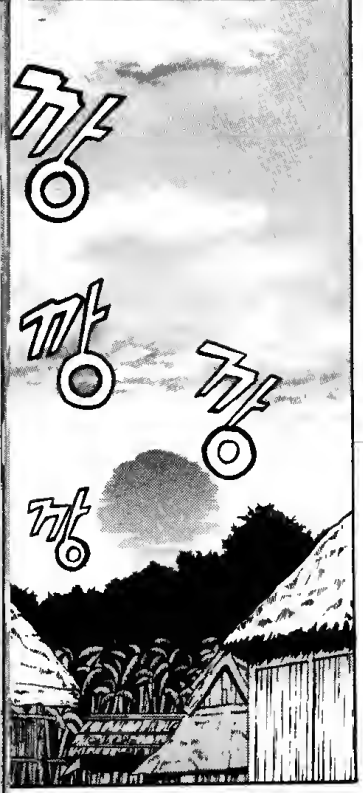
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T TELL YOU EARLIER.

THE MOON...IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL.
A STRANGE FEELING COMES OVER ME WHEN I LOOK AT THE MOON...
ALMOST AS IF...
...SOMEONE IS WAITING FOR ME...ON THE OTHER SIDE...





SOMA...!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FINALLY AWAKE, I SEE.

I'M LETTING IT GO TODAY BECAUSE IT'S YOUR FIRST DAY...BUT YOU'RE GONNA GET NO FOOD AT ALL THE NEXT TIME YOU WAKE UP THIS LATE!
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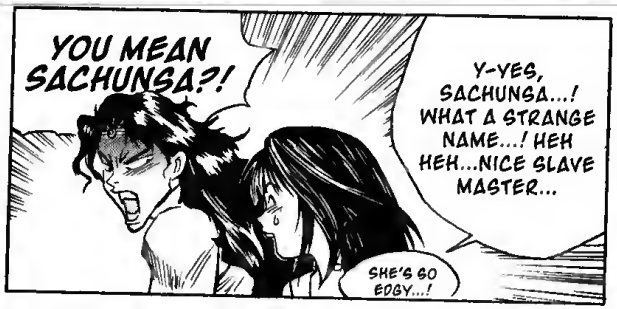
I...I'M SORRY.

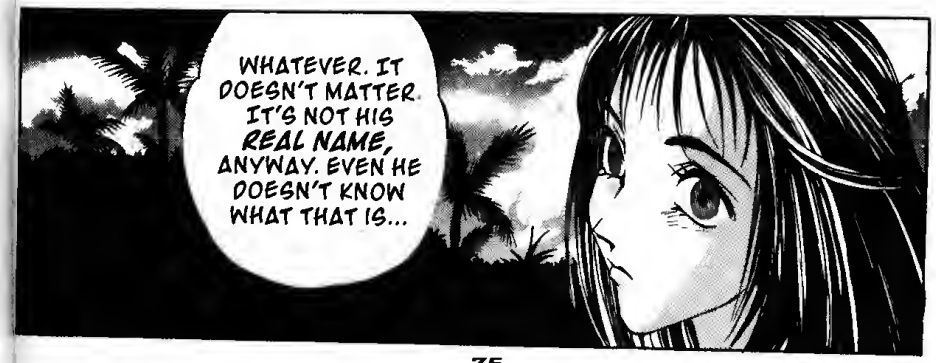
SORRY...? BAH! SORRY DOESN'T GET WATER FROM THE LAKE--BECAUSE THAT'S YOUR JOB! NOW GET TO IT IF YOU DESIRE A SANDWICH IN YOUR FUTURE!
덩그렁!

Y-YES! R-RIGHT AWAY...!

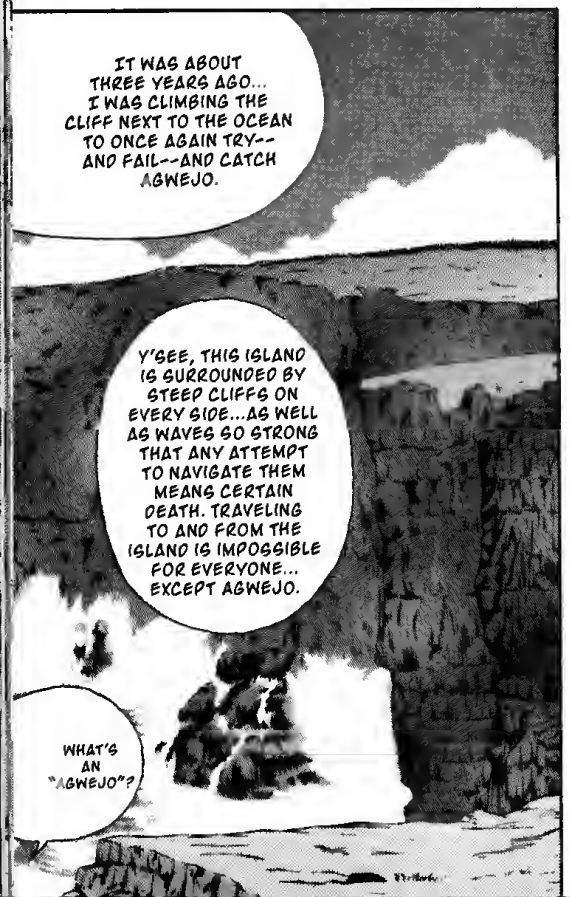
UM...THAT BOY... WHAT'S HIS NAME... WHERE DID HE GO?


YOU MEAN SACHUNSA?!
Y-YES, SACHUNSA...! WHAT A STRANGE NAME...! HEH HEH...NICE SLAVE MASTER...
SHE'S SO EDGY...!

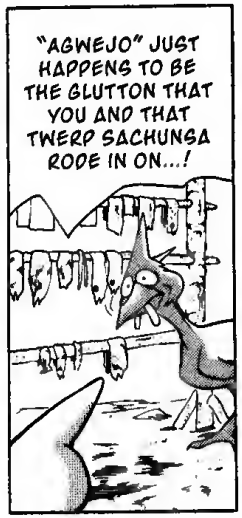
STRANGE?! THAT'S THE NAME I GAVE HIM! DO YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THAT?!
SHE'S REALLY GONNA POP A VESSEL...!
HEH HEH!
N-NO...! I-I MEAN, YES! ER, THAT IS... IT'S NOT A BAD N-NAME... IT'S JUST A LITTLE...WHAT'S THE WORD... UNIQUE! HEH HEH...


WHATEVER. IT DOESN'T MATTER. IT'S NOT HIS REAL NAME, ANYWAY. EVEN HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS...

HE WAS THE FOUR THOUSAND AND FOURTH STRANGER TO WANDER ONTO THIS ISLAND SINCE THE FOUNDING OF SNAIL PROVINCE.

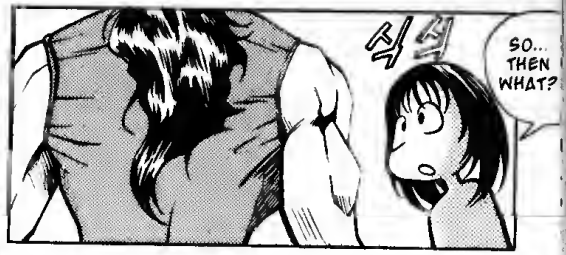

IT WAS ABOUT THREE YEARS AGO... I WAS CLIMBING THE CLIFF NEXT TO THE OCEAN TO ONCE AGAIN TRY-- AND FAIL--AND CATCH AGWEJO.
Y'SEE, THIS ISLAND IS SURROUNDED BY STEEP CLIFFS ON EVERY SIDE...AS WELL AS WAVES SO STRONG THAT ANY ATTEMPT TO NAVIGATE THEM MEANS CERTAIN DEATH. TRAVELING TO AND FROM THE ISLAND IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVERYONE... EXCEPT AGWEJO.
WHAT'S AN "AGWEJO"?

DON'T INTERRUPT ME WHEN I'M FLASHING BACK!!
S-SORRY, SORRY! I WAS JUST CURIOUS...!


"AGWEJO" JUST HAPPENS TO BE THE GLUTTON THAT YOU AND THAT TWERP SACHUNSA RODE IN ON...!

WHY YOU ...!

THAT'S MY DRIED MEAT YOU'RE GOBBLING DOWN, YOU OVERSIZED PIGEON!!


SO... THEN WHAT?

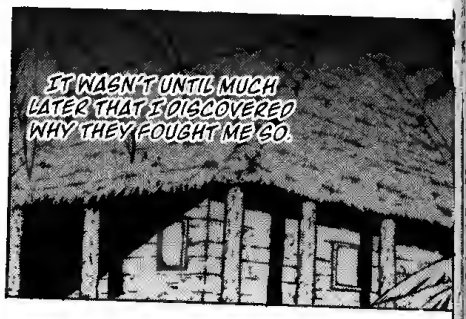
THAT'S WHERE I FIRST SAW HIM.

AT FIRST, I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EYES.

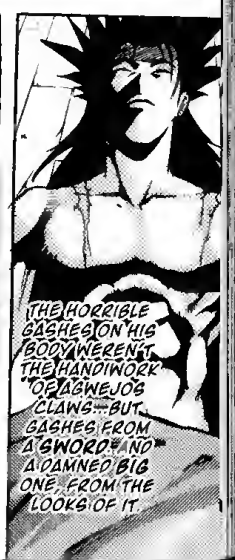
WHY ISN'T IT WORKING, DAMMIT?!
WHENEVER I FEEL A SURGE OF POWER INSIDE ME... EVERYTHING ALWAYS ENDS UP THIS WAY!!
WHAT IS IT?! WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF THIS ENERGY I FEEL IN MY BODY?!
IT'S NOT FUNNY, AGWEJO!!
?
IT'S JUST LIKE OORAMMAMA SAID... I'M A LOST CAUSE....!

THERE WAS A BLOOD-COVERED CORPSE IN AGWEJO'S NEST. HE LOOKED AS THOUGH HE HAD JUST ESCAPED THE CLUTCHES OF HELL ITSELF. IT WAS SACHUNSA.

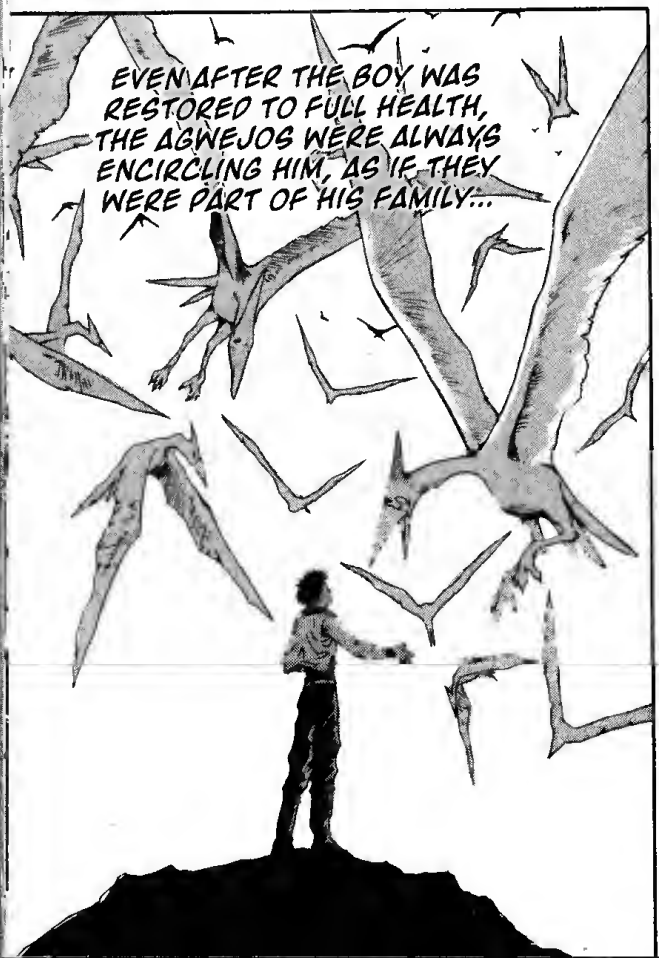
I COULDN'T JUST LET THAT CORPSE BECOME FOOD FOR THE BIRDS. THOUGH THE BIRDS TRIED THEIR BEST TO STOP ME, I STILL MANAGED TO PUSH THROUGH.

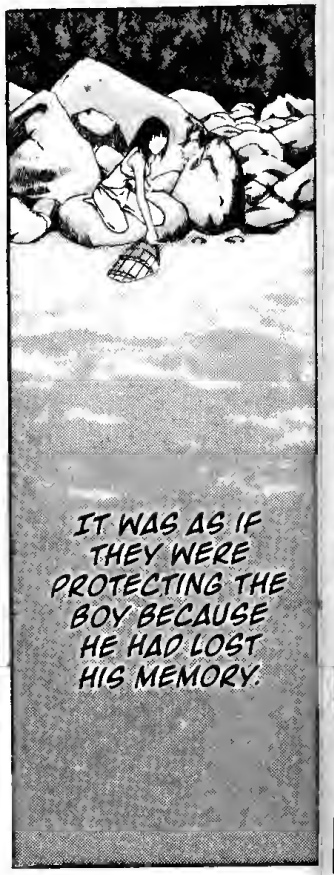

IT WASN'T UNTIL MUCH LATER THAT I DISCOVERED WHY THEY FOUGHT ME SO.

ALTHOUGH THE BOY'S BREATHING WAS WEAK, HE WAS STILL VERY MUCH ALIVE.


THE HORRIBLE GASHES ON HIS BODY WEREN'T THE HANDIWORK OF AGWEJO'S CLAWS... BUT GASHES FROM A SWORD. AND A DAMNED BIG ONE, FROM THE LOOKS OF IT.

THAT DAY, I REALIZED THAT I HAD MISTAKENLY THOUGHT THAT THE AGWEJOS HAD ATTACKED ME BECAUSE THEY WERE ENRAGED AT HAVING LOST THEIR MEAL... BUT IT WASN'T THAT. IT WAS ACTUALLY SADNESS FROM LOSING ONE OF THEIR KIND.

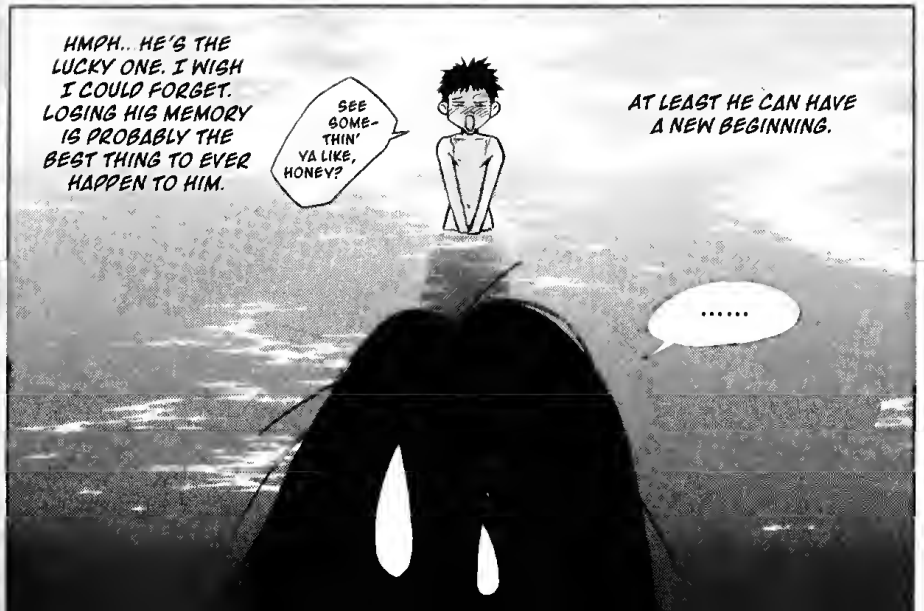

EVEN AFTER THE BOY WAS RESTORED TO FULL HEALTH, THE AGWEJOS WERE ALWAYS ENCIRCLING HIM, AS IF THEY WERE PART OF HIS FAMILY...

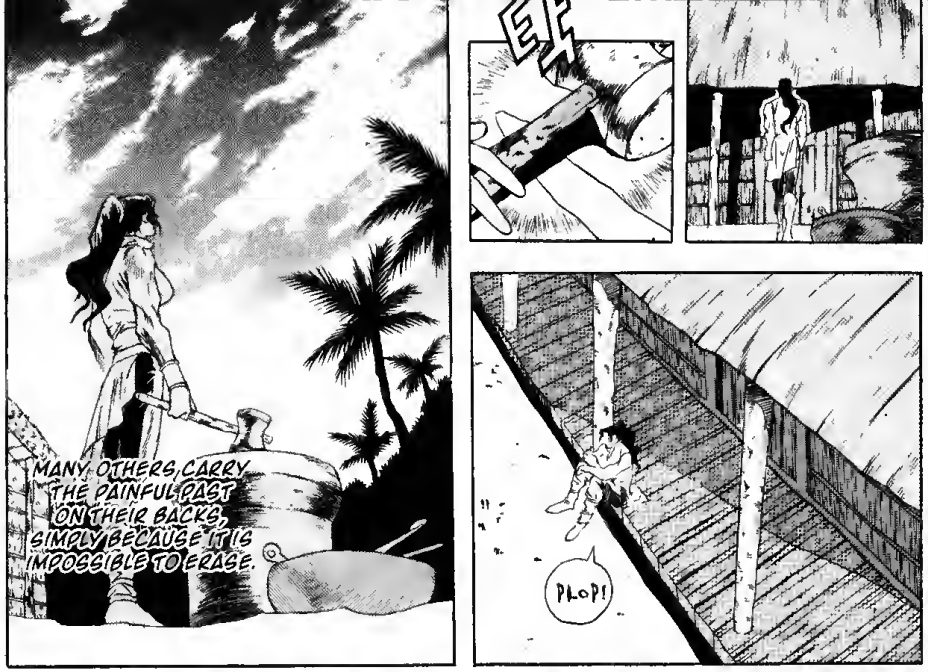

IT WAS AS IF THEY WERE PROTECTING THE BOY BECAUSE HE HAD LOST HIS MEMORY.

EVERYONE HAS PAINFUL MEMORIES IN THEIR PAST.

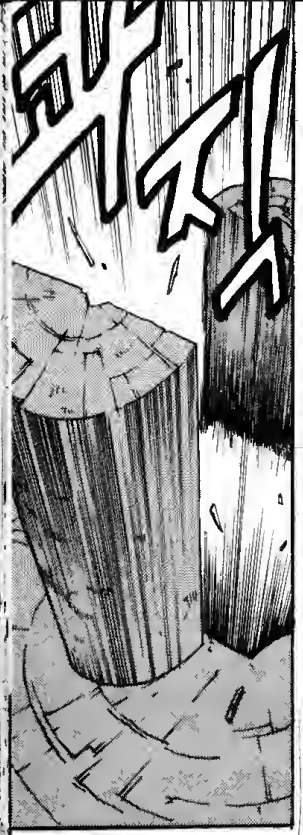
PARTICULARLY THE INHABITANTS OF SNAIL PROVINCE. THE SCARS ON OUR BODIES ARE ECLIPSED ONLY...

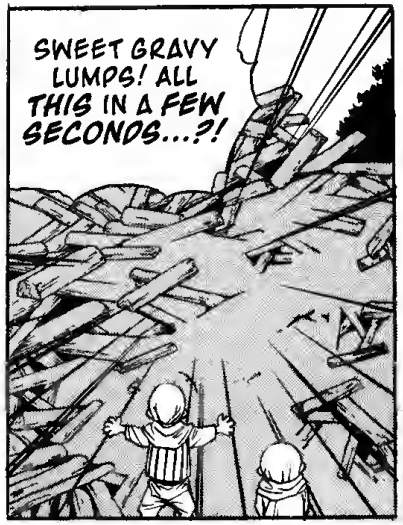
...BY THE SCARS WE HAVE IN OUR HEARTS.


HMPH.. HE'S THE LUCKY ONE. I WISH I COULD FORGET. LOSING HIS MEMORY IS PROBABLY THE BEST THING TO EVER HAPPEN TO HIM.
SEE SOME-THIN' YA LIKE, HONEY?
AT LEAST HE CAN HAVE A NEW BEGINNING.
.....



BLADE OF HEAVEN


SHIIK!!


SWEET GRAVY LUMPS! ALL THIS IN A FEW SECONDS...?!

NOW, I MYSELF WAS A MIGHT POWERFUL FELLER IN MY PRIME... BUT COMPARED TA YOU...
SO FIRM...!
OF COURSE HE IS! HE'S MY SONNY-BOY, AIN'T HE?

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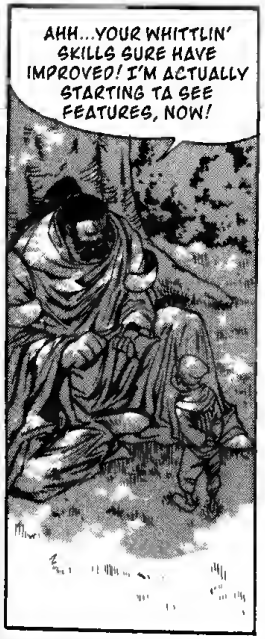
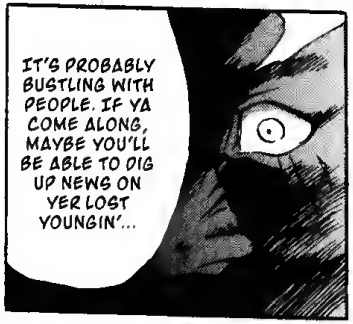
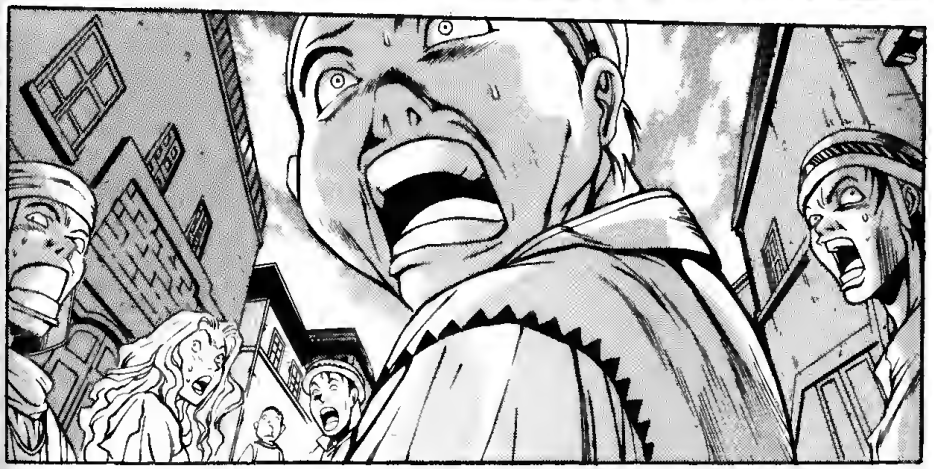

AHH...YOUR WHITTLIN' SKILLS SURE HAVE IMPROVED! I'M ACTUALLY STARTING TA SEE FEATURES, NOW!

SO...I WAS THINKIN'... THE RAIN HAS STOPPED AND THE ROADS ARE OPEN...I WAS GOING TO GO TO TOWN AND BUY SOME SUPPLIES.

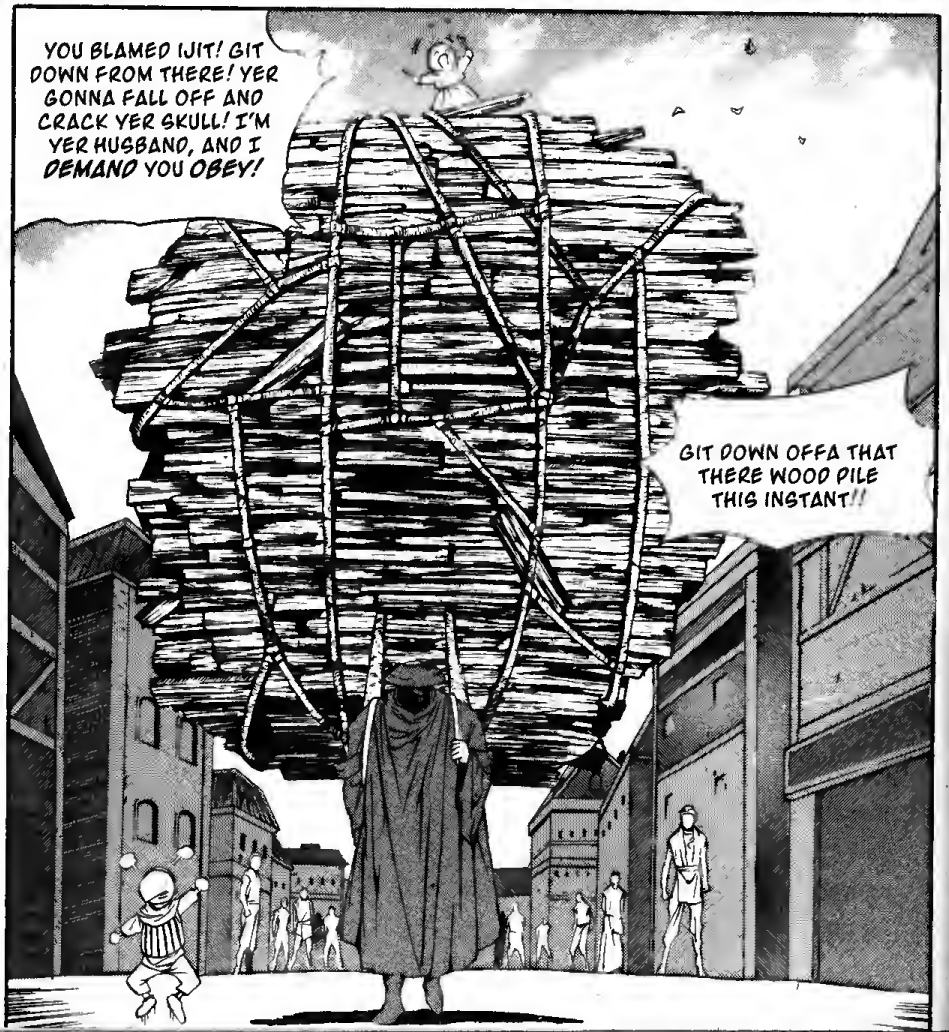

IT'S PROBABLY BUSTLING WITH PEOPLE. IF YA COME ALONG, MAYBE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DIG UP NEWS ON YER LOST YOUNGIN'...

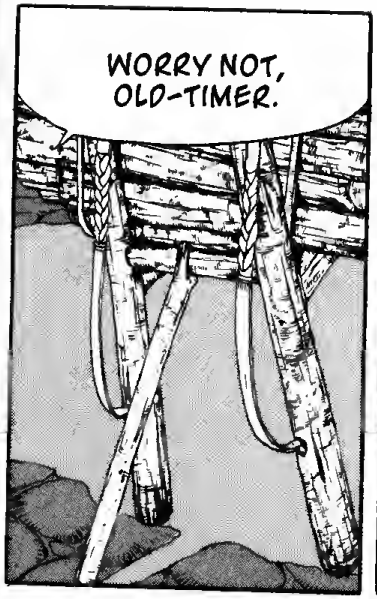
THAT BE A FINE IDEA! LET'S GO!
NOW



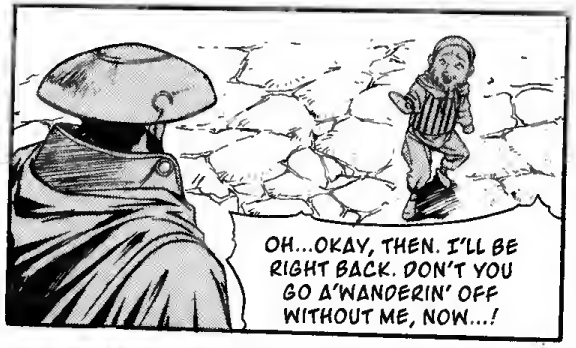
GIDDIYAP! HELLO!
GIDDIYAP! HI!

FASTER, SONNY! FASTER!

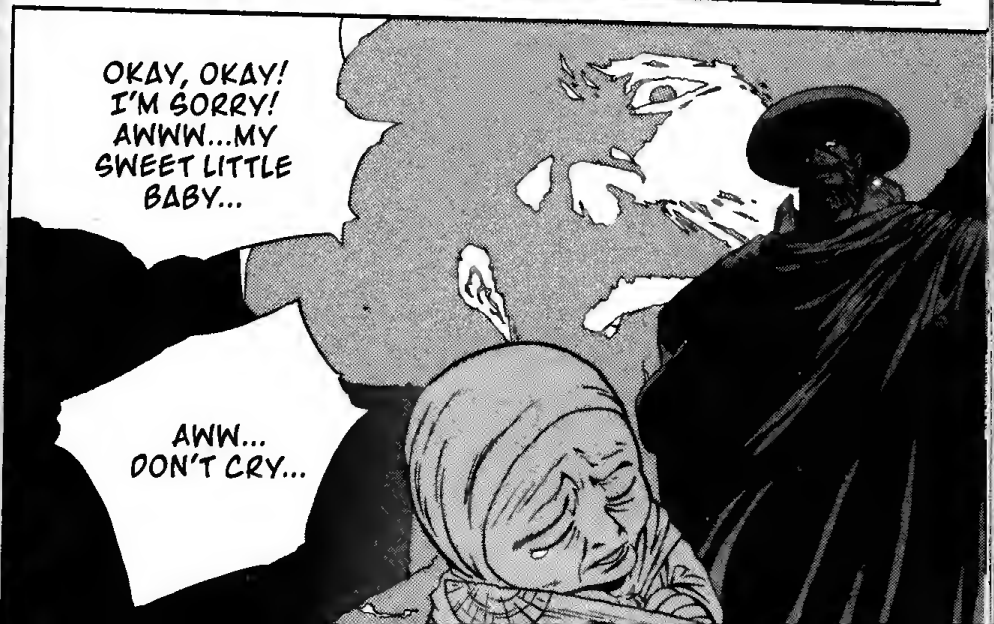

YOU BLAMED IJIT! GIT DOWN FROM THERE! YER GONNA FALL OFF AND CRACK YER SKULL! I'M YER HUSBAND, AND I *DEMAND* YOU *OBEY!*
GIT DOWN OFFA THAT THERE WOOD PILE THIS INSTANT!!


WORRY NOT, OLD-TIMER.

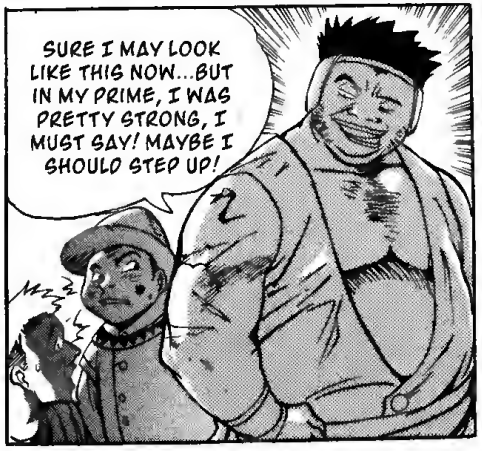
GO AND DO YOUR SHOPPIN'. I'LL WATCH OVER HER AS IF SHE WERE ME BLOOD RELATION.


OH...OKAY, THEN. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK. DON'T YOU GO A'WANDERIN' OFF WITHOUT ME, NOW...!

OOH...LOOK! YOU DONE PEED ON YER POOR GRANNY'S CLOTHES!
TSK TSK!

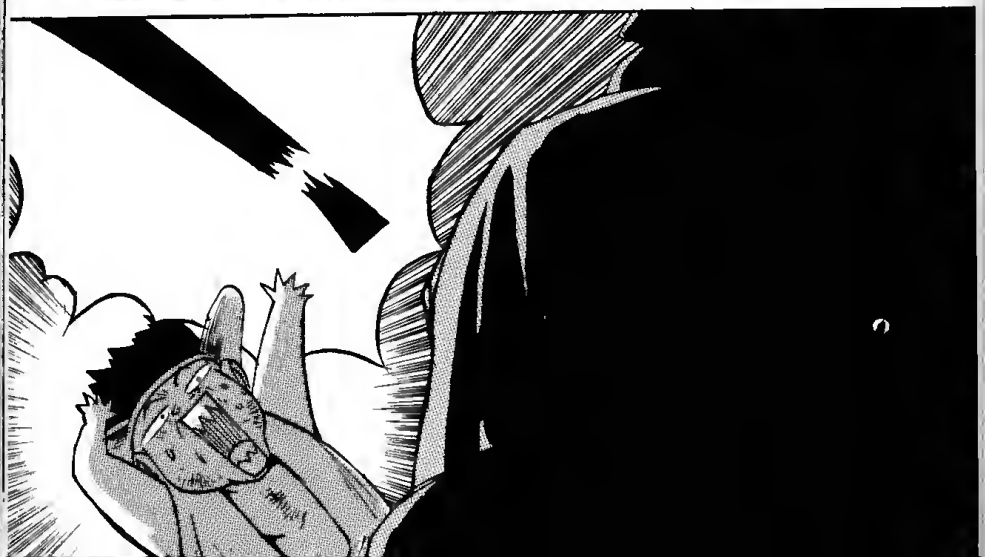

OKAY, OKAY! I'M SORRY! AWWW...MY SWEET LITTLE BABY...
AWW... DON'T CRY...

NOW THAT SAJA KHAN, THE GLORIOUS LIGHT OF THE MEADOWS, IS STEPPING FORWARD, WE'LL BE ABLE TO FINALLY LIVE IN PEACE!!
THAT'S RIGHT...IT'S A LITTLE LATE, BUT WE'RE STILL VERY FORTUNATE! VERY FORTUNATE...


SURE I MAY LOOK LIKE THIS NOW...BUT IN MY PRIME, I WAS PRETTY STRONG, I MUST SAY! MAYBE I SHOULD STEP UP!

PARDON ME... BUT WHAT BE WRITTEN ON THAT PARCHMENT?

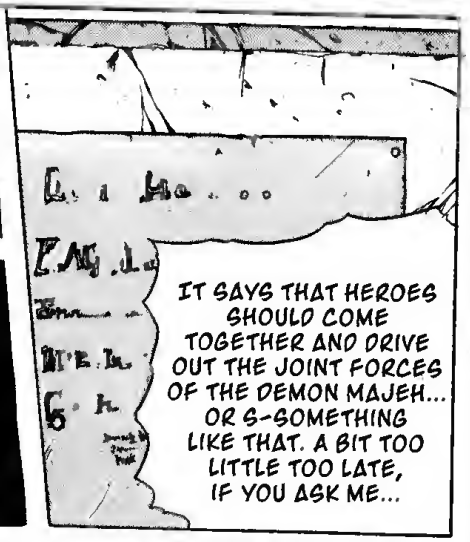
IT SAYS, "QUIT BREATHIN' YOUR ROTTEN FISH BREATH DOWN MY NECK AND READ IT YOURSE--

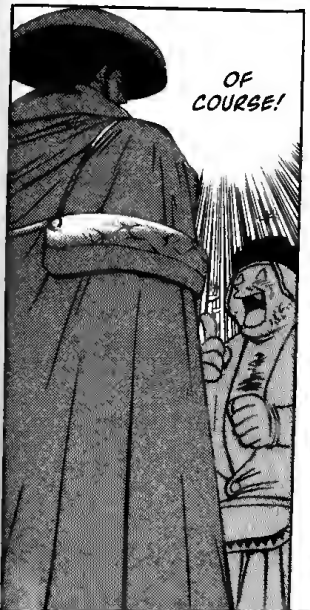


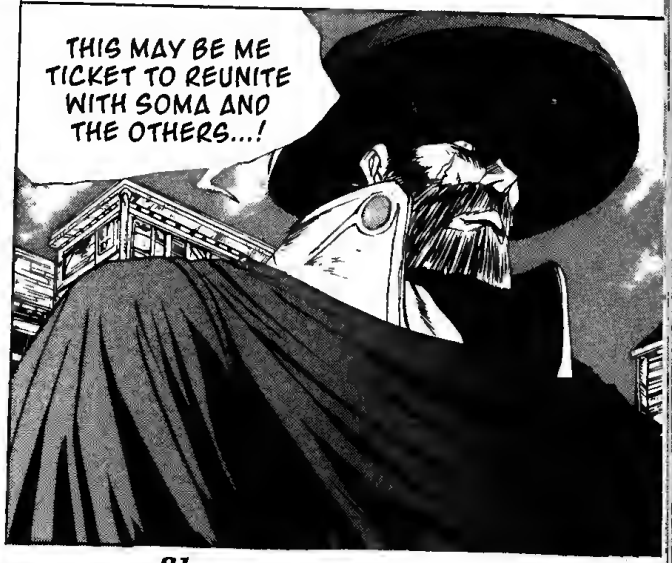
BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW TO READ...

N-NOT A PROBLEM, F-FRIEND! HA HA! I-IT'S A BULLETIN ABOUT THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY, AND HOW THEY'RE RECRUITING SOLDIERS TO FIGHT AGAINST THE DEMON MAJEH!

CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY?


IT SAYS THAT HEROES SHOULD COME TOGETHER AND DRIVE OUT THE JOINT FORCES OF THE DEMON MAJEH... OR S-SOMETHING LIKE THAT. A BIT TOO LITTLE TOO LATE, IF YOU ASK ME...


OF COURSE!


THIS MAY BE ME TICKET TO REUNITE WITH SOMA AND THE OTHERS...!

D-DID YOU JUST SAY...SOMA?

WHAT?! YOU'VE HEARD OF 'IM?! SPEAK, FAT MAN!!

WHERE IS HE?! TELL ME NOW!!
AH...URK... TH-THAT...GUH...

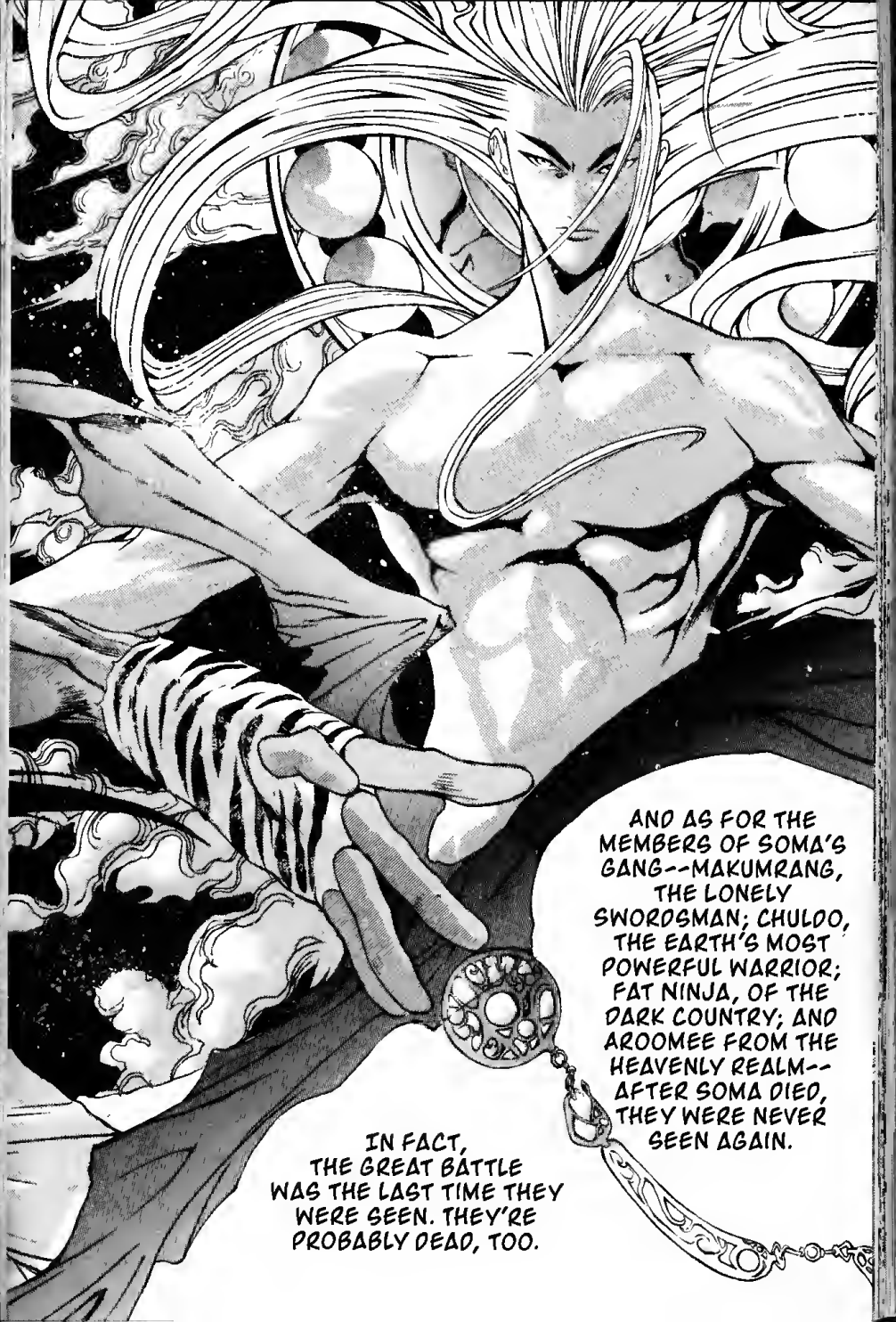
THAT CRETIN DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING.
THUD

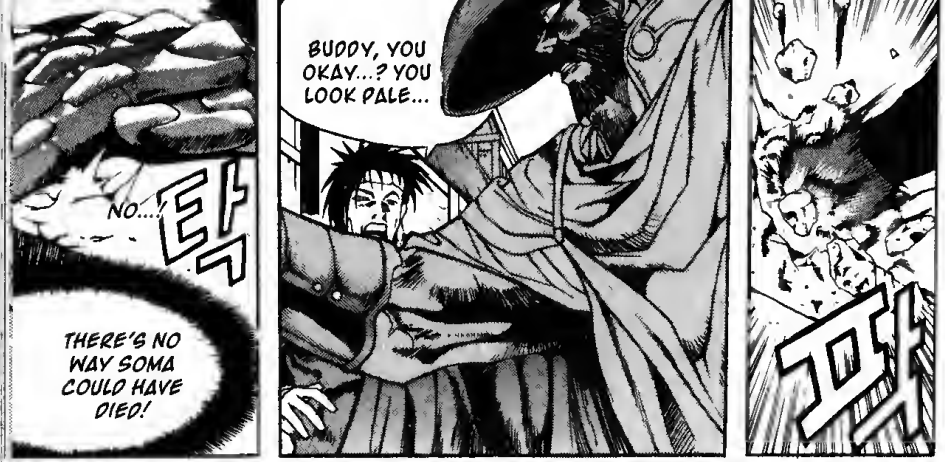
REALLY...? SO BE YOU A GOOD SAMARITAN, OR DO YOU JUST WISH TO TAKE HIS PLACE?

PAL...WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL THIS TIME? BURIED IN A CAVE? SOMA THE HERO DIED A LONG TIME AGO.

SOMA'S... DEAD...?

WHEN I FIRST HEARD THE NEWS, I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT, EITHER. IT REALLY SHOOK US ALL UP.


AND AS FOR THE MEMBERS OF SOMA'S GANG--MAKUMRANG, THE LONELY SWORDSMAN; CHULDO, THE EARTH'S MOST POWERFUL WARRIOR; FAT NINJA, OF THE DARK COUNTRY; AND AROOMEE FROM THE HEAVENLY REALM--AFTER SOMA DIED, THEY WERE NEVER SEEN AGAIN.
IN FACT, THE GREAT BATTLE WAS THE LAST TIME THEY WERE SEEN. THEY'RE PROBABLY DEAD, TOO.


NO...!
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THERE'S NO WAY SOMA COULD HAVE DIED!
BUDDY, YOU OKAY...? YOU LOOK PALE...
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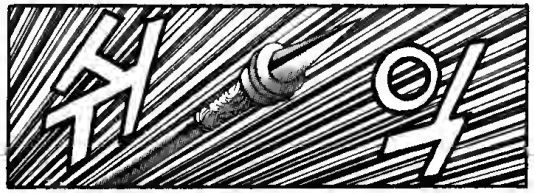
WHAT AMAZING DIVINE POWER! HE REDUCED A SLATE OF GRANITE TO DUST...!

EVERYBODY! THE WANDERING ARMY IS COMING! THE WANDERING ARMY IS CO--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The Wandering Army: rogue warriors who are veterans of the long war. They now roam the earth aimlessly as a thieving gang, plundering and setting fire to villages.

NO--NOT AGAIN!! I'M NOT GONNA LET THEM!!
HONEY!
HONEY, GIT TA COVER!!
HEE HEE...
NO!!

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BLADE OF HEAVEN

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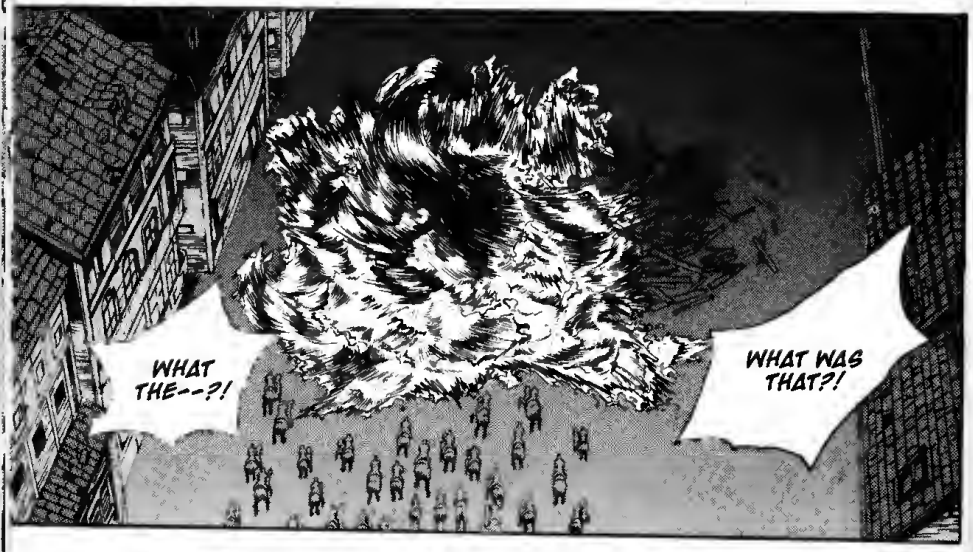
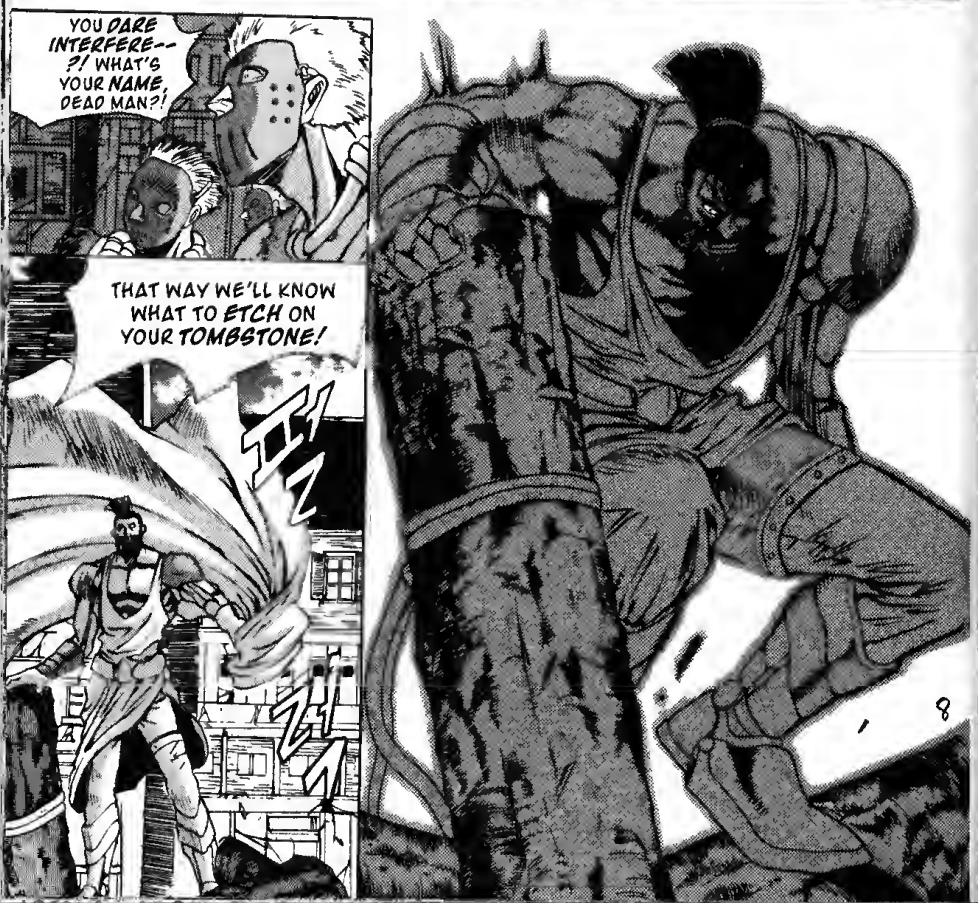
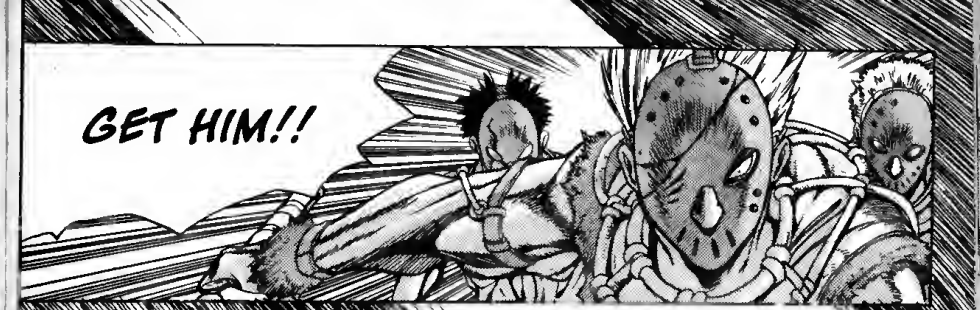
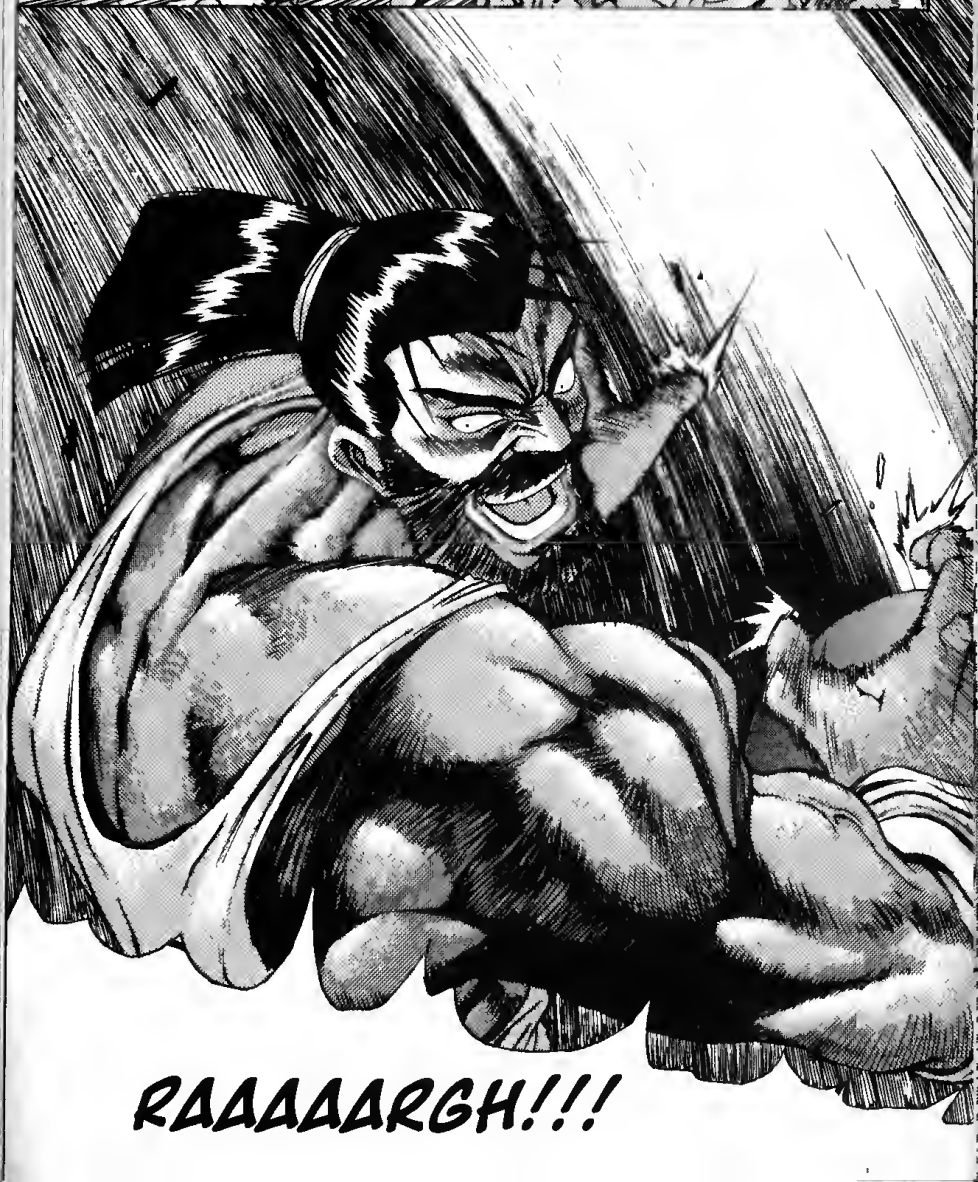
ドカ


WHAT THE--?!
WHAT WAS THAT?!


YOU DARE INTERFERE--?! WHAT'S YOUR NAME, DEAD MAN?!
THAT WAY WE'LL KNOW WHAT TO ETCH ON YOUR TOMBSTONE!
18

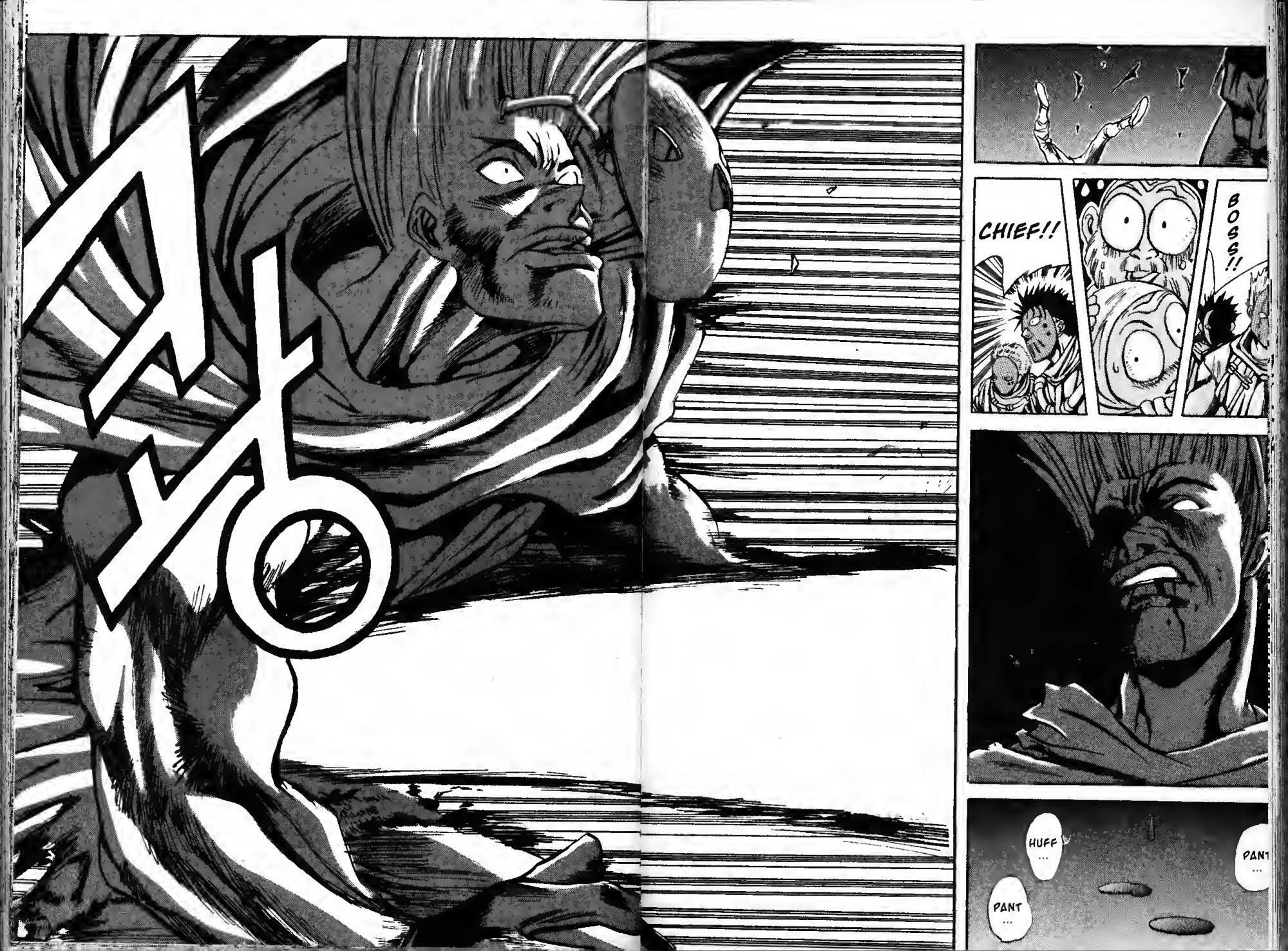

GET HIM!!


RAAAAARGH!!!

SUCH STRENGTH!! IT'S INCREDIBLE!!

THAT'S THE KIND OF MAN THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY NEEDS...!!
BEHIND YOU!!
NEIGGGGHHHH!!
YOU CAN'T RUN FROM ME, YER WHARF RATS!!
HE'S AN ARMY OF ONE...!!
MOVE ASIDE, BOYS! HE'S MINE!!
IF ONLY WE COULD MAKE HIM OUR ALLY...
HAH!

BLINDING STRIKE!!
H-HE BROKE MY SWORD--!! BUT HOW DID HE--


CHIEF!!
BOSS!!
HUFF ...
PANT ...
PANT ...

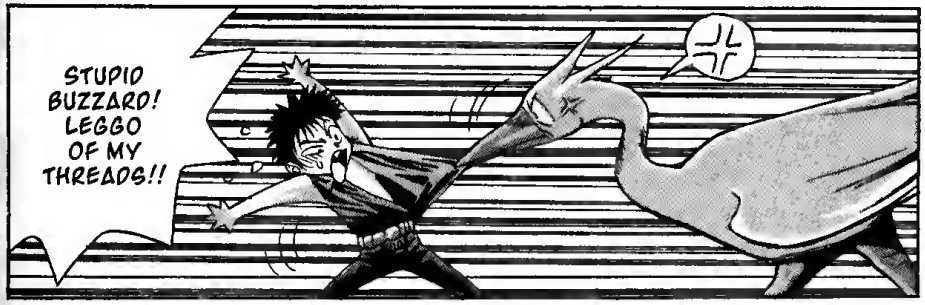
NOW THAT THE APPETIZERS HAVE BEEN SERVED... LET'S GET TO THE MAIN COURSE, AYE?!
HUFF ...
PANT ...
PANT ...
!

WHAT?! YOU SPILLED IT-- AGAIN!

AT THIS RATE, THE BLEEDIN' LAKE'S GONNA EVAPORATE BEFORE YOU GET WATER BACK TO CAMP!

YOU CAN COUGH ALL YOU WANT! PRETENDING TO HAVE A COLD AIN'T GONNA GET YOU OUT OF YOUR DUTIES!

!!


STUPID BUZZARD! LEGGO OF MY THREADS!!

BLADE OF HEAVEN

HEH...
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
OH, BUILDING A SANDCASTLE...WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE, DIMWIT?! I'M CHECKING HER PULSE TO SEE WHAT'S WRONG WITH HER!!
YOU BOTHER ME, KID...SO SPREAD OUT!
PFFT! LIKE A QUACK BLOWHARD LIKE YOU CAN CURE HER COLD...! IF YOU'RE THE SNAIL PROVINCES' LAST DEFENSE AGAINST GERMS, THEN WE'LL ALL BE DEAD FROM THE PLAGUE BY MORNING!
YOU CLOD! THIS AIN'T NO COLD! IT'S STRICTURE OF THE BLOOD VESSELS!!
STRICTURE OF THE BLOOD VESSELS...?
OH, DO I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION NOW, MR. DOUBTFUL? IT'S A SPECIAL CASE, YOU SEE...A RARE DISEASE THAT BEGINS FROM BIRTH!
WELL? QUIT FLAPPIN' YOUR LIPS AT ME AND MAKE WITH THE MEDICINE, ALREADY!
MY LORD...IF IGNORANCE IS BLISS, THAN YOU'VE GOT TO BE ON CLOUD NINE...
LISTEN CAREFULLY, MORON .. I'M A POISON SPECIALIST. AS IN ONE WHO CAN MAKE ANY POISON YOU WANT--FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF KILLING PEOPLE. I'M NOT A PHARMACIST!!
ON TOP OF THAT, CONSTRICTION OF THE BLOOD VESSELS IS INCURABLE. EVERYONE WHO HAS IT DIES BEFORE THEY REACH THE AGE OF FIFTEEN, DUDE TO THE COLLAPSE OF THE WEAKENED VESSEL WALLS.
THE FACT THAT THIS GIRL MADE IT THIS FAR IS... WELL, A MIRACLE.

HER TIES WITH THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY IS WHAT KEPT HER ALIVE. THEY PROBABLY GAVE HER ENOUGH RESTORATIVE TONIC TO KEEP HER ALIVE... UNTIL NOW, THAT IS.
SO YOU SEE, IT WOULD BE BEST FOR YOU TO JUST GIVE UP...
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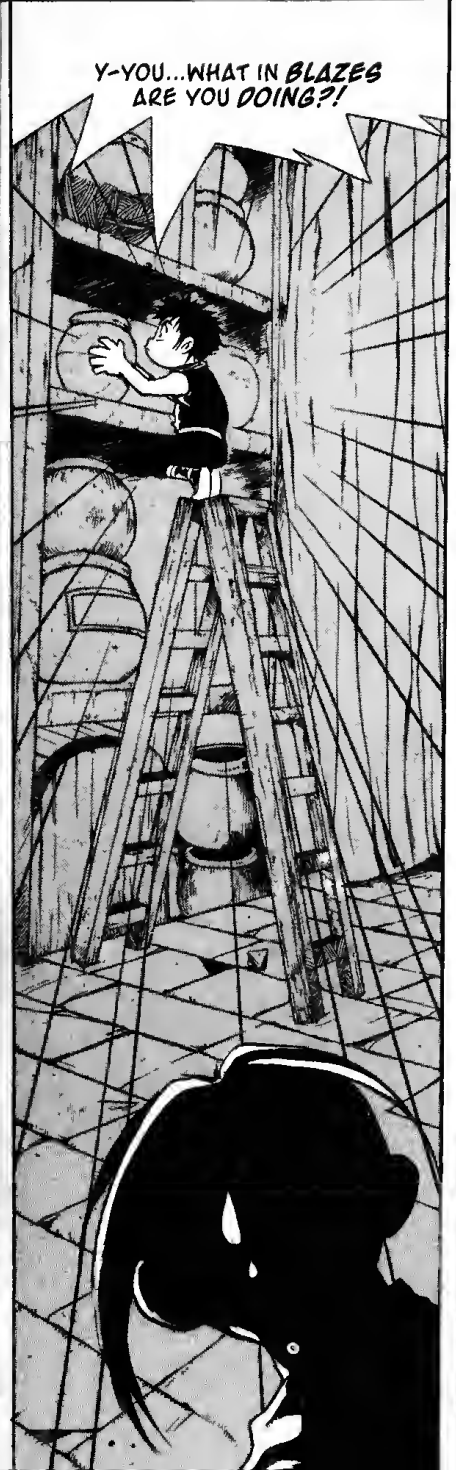
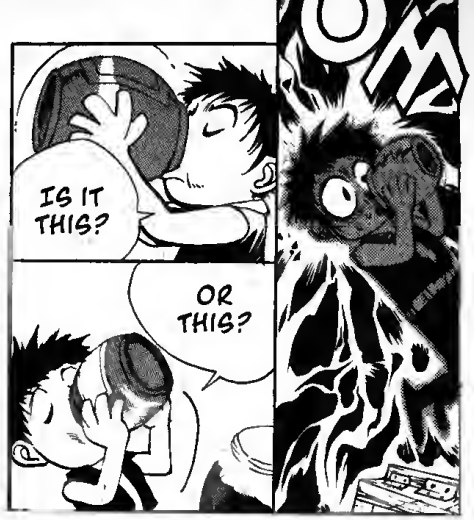
AHH!


Y-YOU...WHAT IN BLAZES ARE YOU DOING?!


IS IT THIS?
OR THIS?
OH

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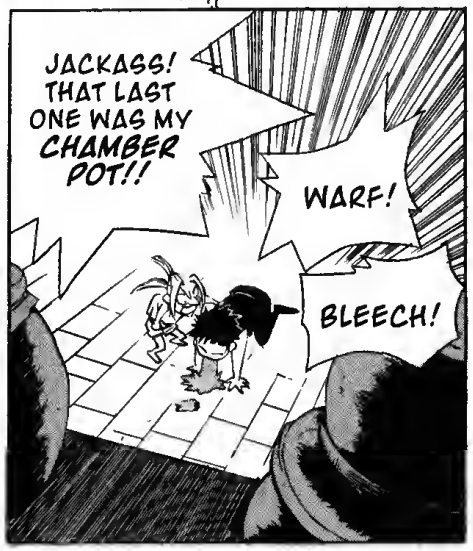

JACKASS! THAT LAST ONE WAS MY CHAMBER POT!!
WARF!
BLEECH!

WHY DOU KEEP AH AIMBER OT IN OERE?! GWEAT! OY OOT OOOKIE ON OY OOUNGUE, AND OHE'S OYIN'!!

O

HUSH UP, BOY! THE PATIENT WILL HEAR YOU...!
MMPH! MMPH!

.....

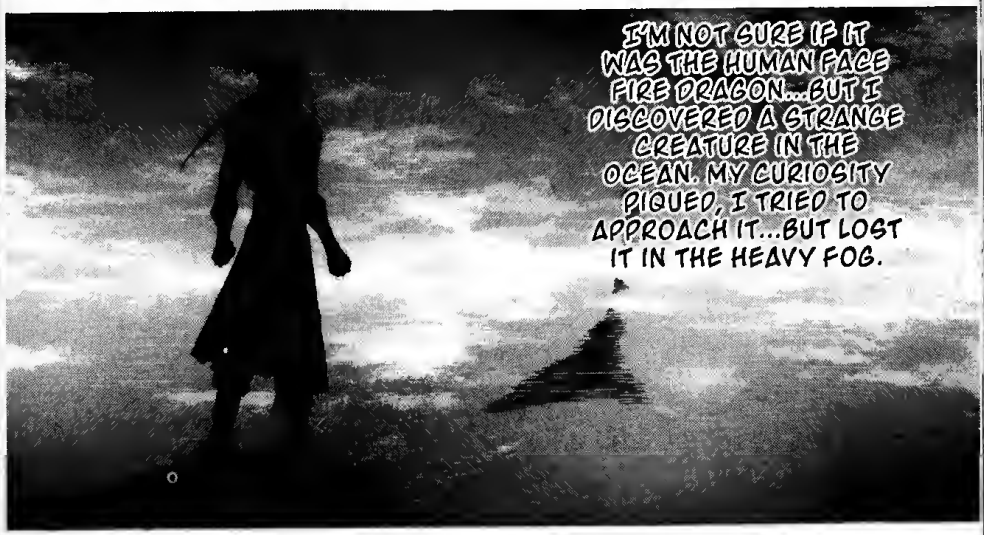
PHEW! THAT WAS CLOSE!
....

O11
O4

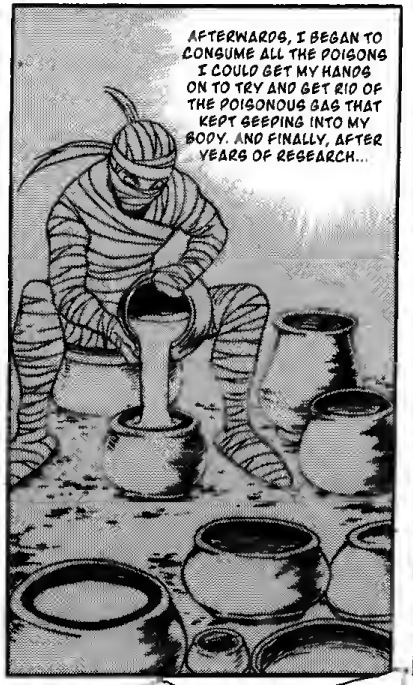
SO...IS THERE SOME OTHER WAY TO HELP HER...?

FREAKIN' IDIOT... YES, YES! THERE IS ONE WAY...! ICK! IT'S IN MY SHOES!
THE HEART OF A LEGENDARY CREATURE... UGH...CALLED THE HUMAN FACE FIRE DRAGON...

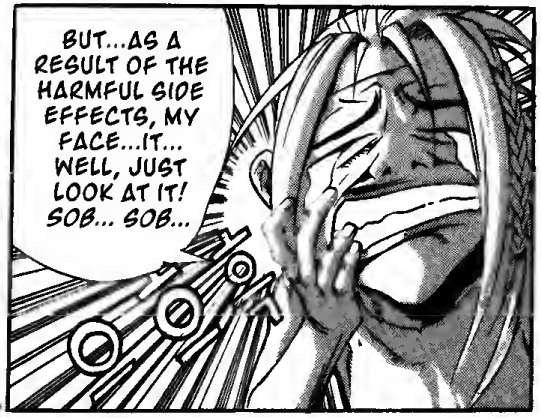
IT WAS PROBABLY ABOUT THE TIME I FIRST CAME TO SNAIL PROVINCE...


I'M NOT SURE IF IT WAS THE HUMAN FACE FIRE DRAGON...BUT I DISCOVERED A STRANGE CREATURE IN THE OCEAN. MY CURIOSITY PIQUED, I TRIED TO APPROACH IT...BUT LOST IT IN THE HEAVY FOG.

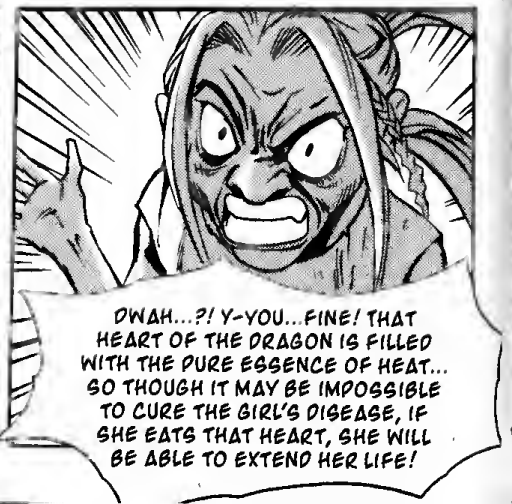
NEVERTHELESS, I REALIZED MUCH LATER THAT THE HEAVY FOG THAT WAS ALL AROUND ME WASN'T REALLY FOG AT ALL... BUT POISONOUS GAS THAT THE CREATURE PRODUCED EVERY TIME IT TOOK A BREATH.


AFTERWARDS, I BEGAN TO CONSUME ALL THE POISONS I COULD GET MY HANDS ON TO TRY AND GET RID OF THE POISONOUS GAS THAT KEPT SEEPING INTO MY BODY. AND FINALLY, AFTER YEARS OF RESEARCH...

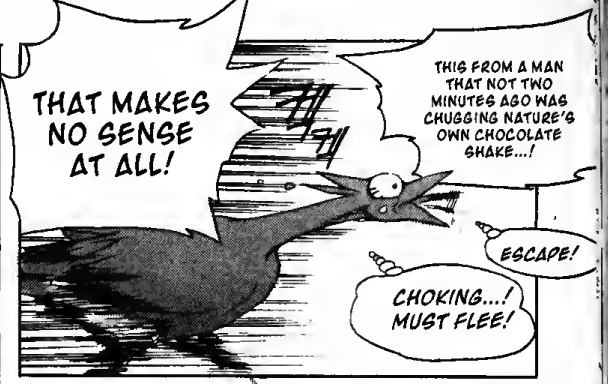
...I WAS FINALLY ABLE TO PUSH OUT THE POISON OF THE HUMAN FACE FIRE DRAGON.

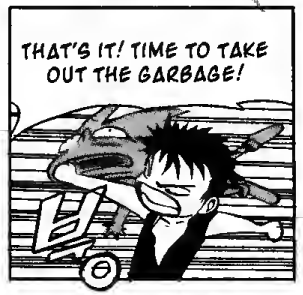

BUT...AS A RESULT OF THE HARMFUL SIDE EFFECTS, MY FACE...IT... WELL, JUST LOOK AT IT! SOB... SOB...

WHY YOU HOMELY LITTLE DRAMA QUEEN! I ASKED YOU ABOUT MEDICINE, NOT TO HEAR YOUR SAD SACK ORIGIN STORY!


DWAH...?! Y-YOU...FINE! THAT HEART OF THE DRAGON IS FILLED WITH THE PURE ESSENCE OF HEAT... SO THOUGH IT MAY BE IMPOSSIBLE TO CURE THE GIRL'S DISEASE, IF SHE EATS THAT HEART, SHE WILL BE ABLE TO EXTEND HER LIFE!

THERE IS NO CLEAR SEPARATION BETWEEN MEDICINE AND POISON. IT'S ALL DETERMINED BY HOW YOU USE IT AND TO WHAT IS DEGREE. OF COURSE THIS MERELY THE OPINION OF A "QUACK BLOWHARD," AS YOU SO DELICATELY PUT IT...!
EEEP! CAUGHT RED-BEAKED!
FLAP FLAP


THAT MAKES NO SENSE AT ALL!
THIS FROM A MAN THAT NOT TWO MINUTES AGO WAS CHUGGING NATURE'S OWN CHOCOLATE SHAKE...!
ESCAPE!
CHOKING...! MUST FLEE!


THAT'S IT! TIME TO TAKE OUT THE GARBAGE!

GOU GEDDER HAT HE GO! (YOU BETTER LET ME GO!)

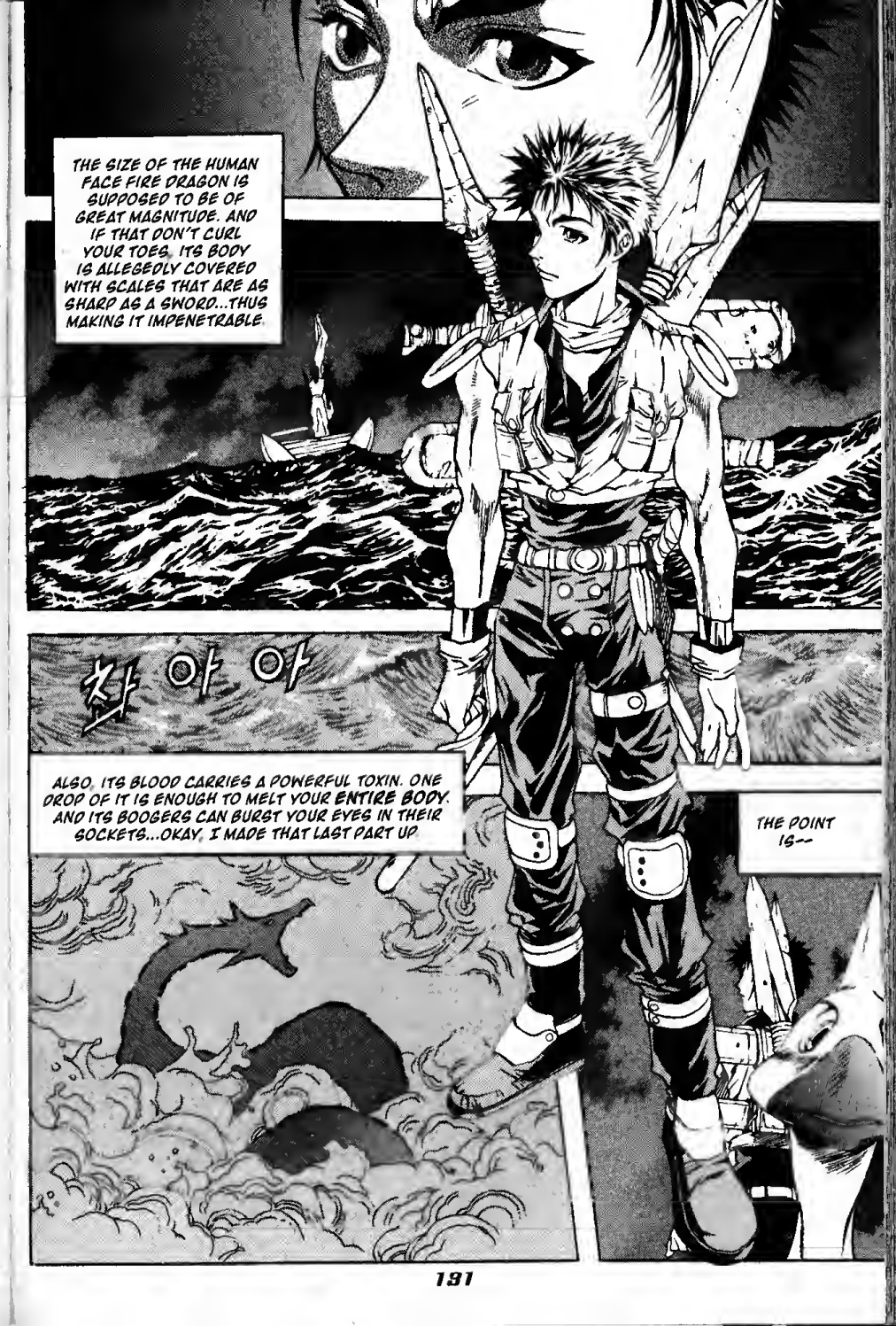
끼이익

...?

H-HEY! BROTHER WOODEN CARVING! WAIT!
PANT
PANT
YOU...HUFF...SURE TAKE...PANT...HUGE STEPS, BROTHER WOODEN CARVING...!
I SAW YOU TAKING GREAT CARE WITH THAT LITTLE WOODEN STATUE, SO I FIGURED THERE MUST BE A STORY BEHIND IT...
WHISK!
.....
O-OH...! ABOUT THE N-NICKNAME...! YOU SAVED MY LIFE...BUT I STILL DON'T EVEN KNOW YOUR NAME! HEH HEH!
...?

W-WAIT! IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, I WON'T CALL YOU THAT ANYMORE!
LOOK--I KNOW THIS PLACE VERY WELL! IT'S ALWAYS COVERED WITH A THICK VEIL OF FOG, SO IT'S VERY EASY TO LOSE YOUR WAY!
THOUGH I MUST ADMIT, I WOULDN'T KNOW MY WAY EITHER IF IT WEREN'T FOR MY PURSUIT OF OUR KIDNAPPED COMMANDER AND THE SCOUNDREL THAT TOOK HER, SACHUNSA!
AT FIRST, I WAS PLANNING TO SECRETLY ENTER THE DEN OF ROBBERS...BUT I ENDED UP DRIFTING AT SEA, WITH ONLY FILTHY SALT WATER TO DRINK.
WITH SNAIL PROVINCE'S NATURAL BARRIERS OF DANGEROUS REEFS AND UNPREDICTABLE OCEAN CURRENTS... THE ISLAND MAY AS WELL BE AN IRON FORTRESS.

BUT NO MATTER! THERE IS NOT A BARRIER, WHETHER IT MAN-MADE OR NATURAL, THAT WILL KEEP ME FROM HUNTING DOWN MY PREY AND SLOWLY SQUEEZING THE LIFE FROM HIS—
THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY CAMP...BE IT FAR FROM HERE?
H-HUH...? O-OH! SORRY! HA HA! I LOST CONTROL FOR A MOMENT...! WHEW!
IN ANY CASE, IF A HERO LIKE YOU WERE TO JOIN OUR CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY, NOTHING WOULD BE A PROBLEM--NOT THE DEMON MAJEH, NOR THE THIEVING RINGS...
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND... I'M JUST SEARCHING FOR SOMEONE


THE SIZE OF THE HUMAN FACE FIRE DRAGON IS SUPPOSED TO BE OF GREAT MAGNITUDE. AND IF THAT DON'T CURL YOUR TOES, ITS BODY IS ALLEGEDLY COVERED WITH SCALES THAT ARE AS SHARP AS A SWORD...THUS MAKING IT IMPENETRABLE.
차 아 아
ALSO, ITS BLOOD CARRIES A POWERFUL TOXIN. ONE DROP OF IT IS ENOUGH TO MELT YOUR ENTIRE BODY. AND ITS BOOGERS CAN BURST YOUR EYES IN THEIR SOCKETS...OKAY, I MADE THAT LAST PART UP.
THE POINT IS—

--ALL OF THAT AIN'T NOTHIN' COMPARED TO THE TERROR OF GAZIN' UPON THE HUMAN FACE THAT IS ATTACHED TO THE SIDE OF ITS HEAD.

WHEN IT DISCOVERS ITS PREY, THIS FACE SUPPOSEDLY FLASHES THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SMILE IN THE WORLD, DROWNING UNFORTUNATE SCHNOOKS IN ITS RADIANCE.

BY THE TIME YOU REALIZE THAT YOU'VE JUST SEEN THE **SMILE** OF YOUR **EXECUTIONER**, IT'S ALREADY **TOO LATE**...

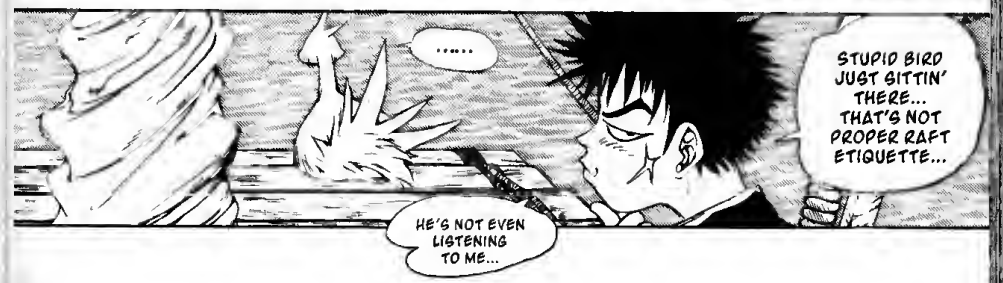
BLADE OF HEAVEN

THREE DAYS... THREE DAYS I'VE BEEN DRIFTING AT SEA!

I MYSELF CANNOT TELL YOU WHEN THIS GIRL WILL DIE... JUST KNOW THERE AIN'T MUCH TIME LEFT!
IT ALL DEPENDS UPON WHEN THE TONIC SHE TOOK WHEN SHE WAS STILL WITH THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE WEARS OFF.
THAT CAN BE TOMORROW...OR THIS INSTANT.
DAMN!
DAMN!
DAMN!
MAN...WHERE IS THIS FRUITY "HUMAN FACE FIRE DRAGON" ANYWAY?! I HAVEN'T SEEN IT, OR ONE CRUMMY FISH, SINCE WE'VE BEEN OUT HERE!!
촤 아아

I CAN'T GO MUCH LONGER WITHOUT SOME GRUB...
GROWL...
HEY...SHIKCHOONG! ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME?!
.....

DON'T YOU HEAR THE THUNDER IN MY STOMACH?! WHAT KINDA BIRD ARE YOU?!
BE OF SOME USE AND LAY ME AN EGG, ALREADY!! THAT, OR GO GET ME SOME FISH TO EAT!!


.....
STUPID BIRD JUST SITTIN' THERE... THAT'S NOT PROPER RAFT ETIQUETTE...
HE'S NOT EVEN LISTENING TO ME...

HEH HEH HEH...
SILENCE
.....
SLEEP...
SLEEP...
SLEEP...
HUH...?
SWEET GRANDPA JOE!! HE'S TOTALLY LOST IT!!
DHUUURR...

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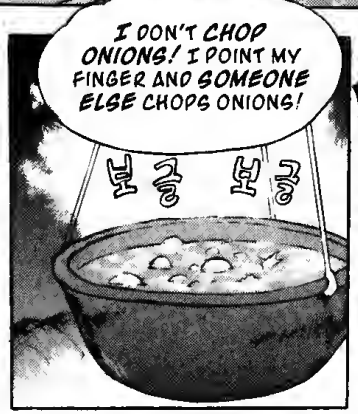
I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M DOING THIS...! I'M THE BOSS...!


I DON'T CHOP ONIONS! I POINT MY FINGER AND SOMEONE ELSE CHOPS ONIONS!
보글 보글

Fail!

AIIIEEE!!

WHAT?! WHAT HAPPENED?! WHAT'S WRONG?!
I-I... I HAD A S-SCARY DREAM...

S-SORRY...
BUT...
DRIP
DRIP

IT WAS SO REAL...SO VIVID...IT DIDN'T SEEM LIKE A DREAM AT ALL...

I DREAMT THAT SACHUNSA WAS EATEN ALIVE BY A MONSTER. AGWEJO, TOO...

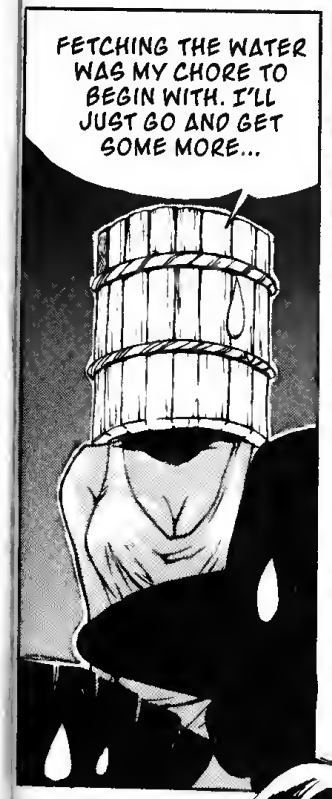
BAH! I LIKED YOU MUCH BETTER WHEN YOU DIDN'T TALK! THEN I WOULDN'T HAVE TO ENDURE YOUR NONSENSICAL RANTING! ANYWAY, DINNER'S READY. AT LEAST YOU CAN'T TALK WITH A MOUTHFUL OF FOOD...
UH...BUT...I DIDN'T BRING THE PAIL OF WATER...
YOU DON'T NEED TO FETCH THE WATER FOR THE TIME BEING. THE IDIOT SERVANTS WHO WORSHIP YOU HAVE BEEN DOING YOUR CHORES ON YOUR BEHALF.
WOR... SHIP...?
SER...VANTS?
HERE I COME, MY LADY!
ME, TOO!
HERE THEY COME... THE MORONIC DUO...
MY LADY--!! ARE YOU OKAY?!
HEH... I'M ALRI--

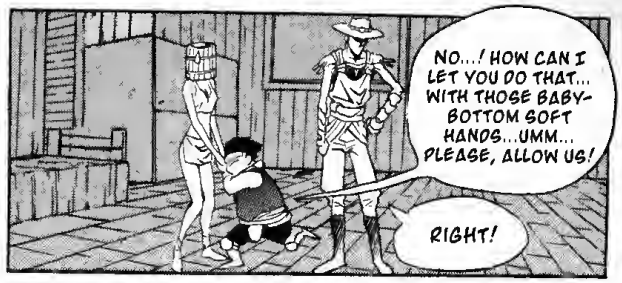
GLUB!
N-NOT M-ME! THIS GUY...! HE'S THE ONE WHO TRIPPED ME!
WHO WANTS TO DIE FIRST?
L-LIES, I SAY! WHO GRABBED WHO F-FIRST, HUH?!

WHAT THE...?! ARE YOU TALKING BACK TO YOUR OLDER BROTHER?!
OH, WE'RE STARTING THAT AGAIN?! I'M OLDER THAN YOU BY AT LEAST TEN SECONDS!!

OH HO! DID YOU JUST HIT ME?!
THAT'S RIGHT, I HIT YOU!! WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO ABOUT IT?!
UNH... MY BLOOD PRESSURE...
FINE! A DUEL IT IS!!

THERE'S NO USE IN ARGUING OVER SPILT WATER-- SO STOP IT, THE BOTH OF YOU!


FETCHING THE WATER WAS MY CHORE TO BEGIN WITH. I'LL JUST GO AND GET SOME MORE...


NO...! HOW CAN I LET YOU DO THAT... WITH THOSE BABY-BOTTOM SOFT HANDS...UMM... PLEASE, ALLOW US!
RIGHT!

THANK YOU...

THANK YOU ALL...

MAMA... SHE EVEN PREPARED A MEAL FOR ME...
I...I DON'T LIKE THESE SAD VIBES! SOB! SNIFF!
Y-YEAH! IT'S MAKING ME CRY, TOO...! SNORT! SNIFF!

WHO YOU CALLING MAMA, YOU WEEPY-EYED HUSSY?!
I'M STILL A "PURE AS THE DRIVEN SNOW" VIRGIN! MY HYMEN IS AN IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS WALL!!
Y-YES! H-HYMEN! IMPREGNABLE! O-OF COURSE...!! S-SORRY!!
FRICKIN' PRETTY GIRL WITH HER PORCELAIN SKIN...!
HUFF!
HUFF!
HUFF!
WHEW...!
DO YOU KNOW WHERE SACHUNSA IS...?
SONOFA --!!
STUPID ONION!! STUPID GIRL!! WHAT KIND OF WOMAN DOES SHE THINK I AM?! THE KIND THAT SLEEPS ALONE AT NIGHT LONGING FOR SOMEONE TO FILL THE EMPTY CHARADE THAT IS HER LIFE?! HAH! NOT ME, SISTER! NOT!! ME!!
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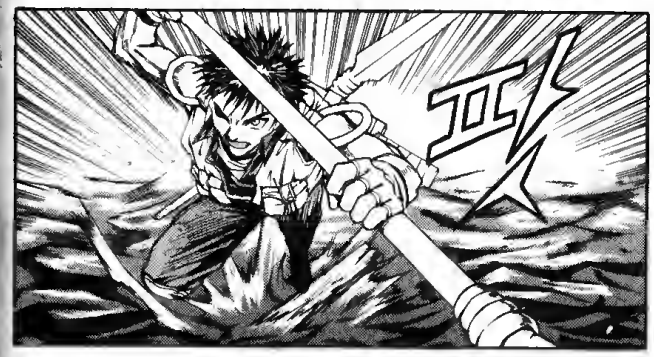
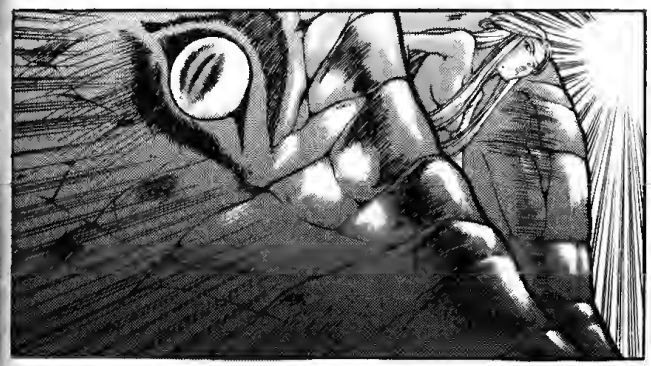
AGWEJO!!

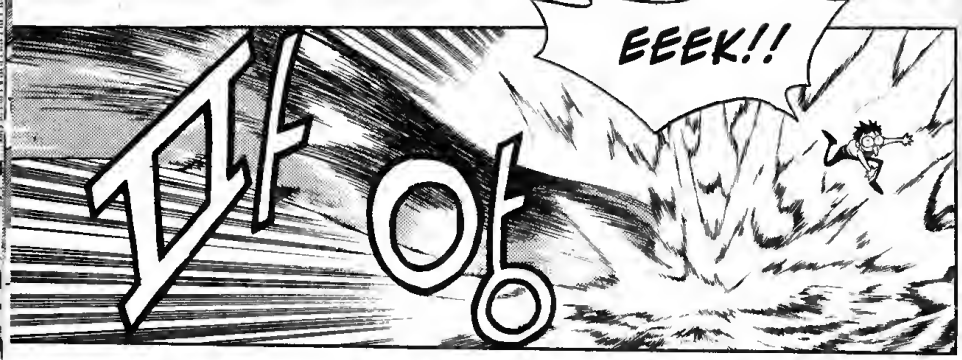


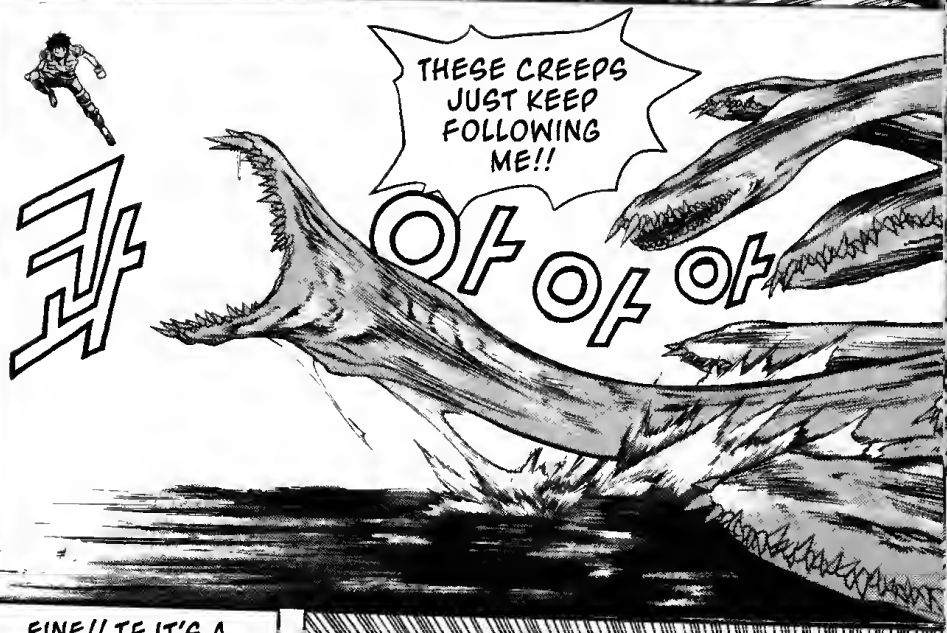


AND THAT'S JUST THE BEGINNING, YA OVERGROWN SALAMANDER! DON'T YOU EVER TRY AND HURT MY FRIEND!!
He's stuck between the dragon's teeth.
AGWEJO! YOU'RE ALIVE!!
GRRRR...
OH REALLY?! WELL YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY-- IF THY EYE OFFENDS... PLUCK IT OUT!!
AAH
OH

THOK!
WHAT THE--?! THERE'S MORE THAN ONE?!
THOSE OTHER TWO ARE PROTECTING THE MIDDLE ONE...
...WHICH MUST MAKE YOU THE BULL'S-EYE, EH LIZARD LIPS?!

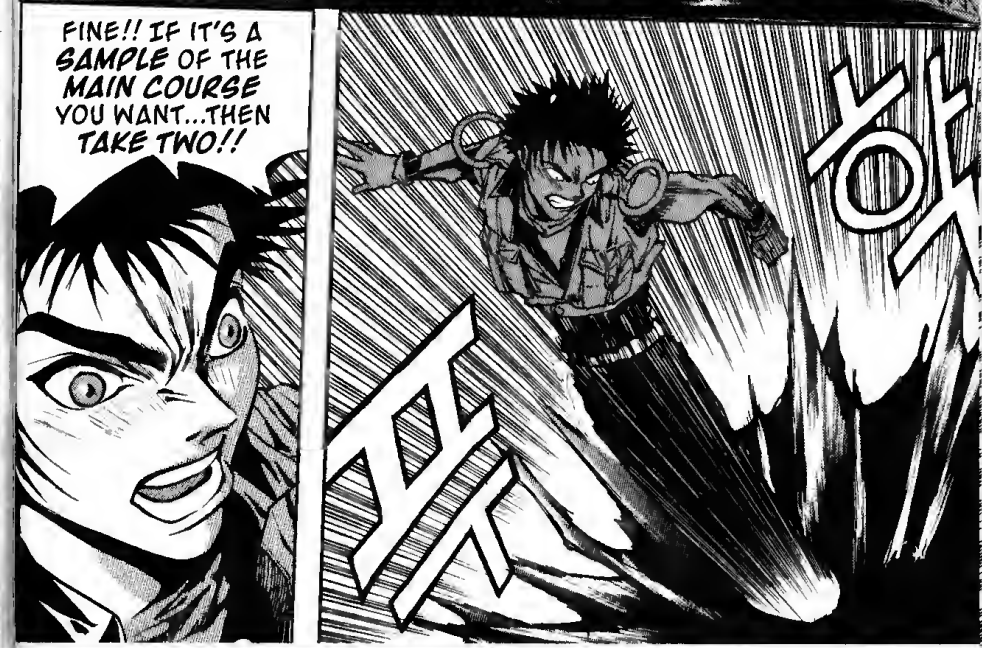
OKAY, YOU GUYS ARE WHAT? A HUNDRED FEET TALL, HAVE POISON FOR BLOOD AND A HOT CHICK RIDING PIGGY BACK. WHILE I'M 5'9, A GEMINI, AND LIKE PICNICS AND MOONLIGHT WALKS. I'D SAY THE ODDS ARE PRETTY MUCH STACKED AGAINST YOU, YES?


EEEK!!


THESE CREEPS JUST KEEP FOLLOWING ME!!

I GUESS YOU DISAGREE...!!
YIIIPE...!!

AND I THOUGHT I WAS RAVENOUS!


FINE!! IF IT'S A SAMPLE OF THE MAIN COURSE YOU WANT...THEN TAKE TWO!!

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OPEN WIDE, BABY BIRDS-- 'CUZ DINNER IS SERVED!!

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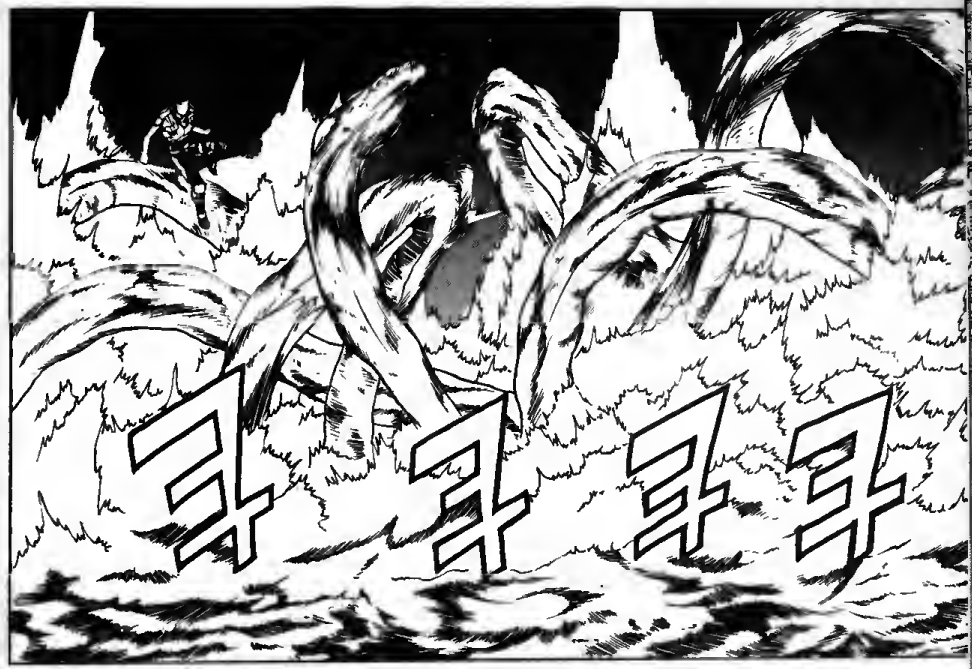
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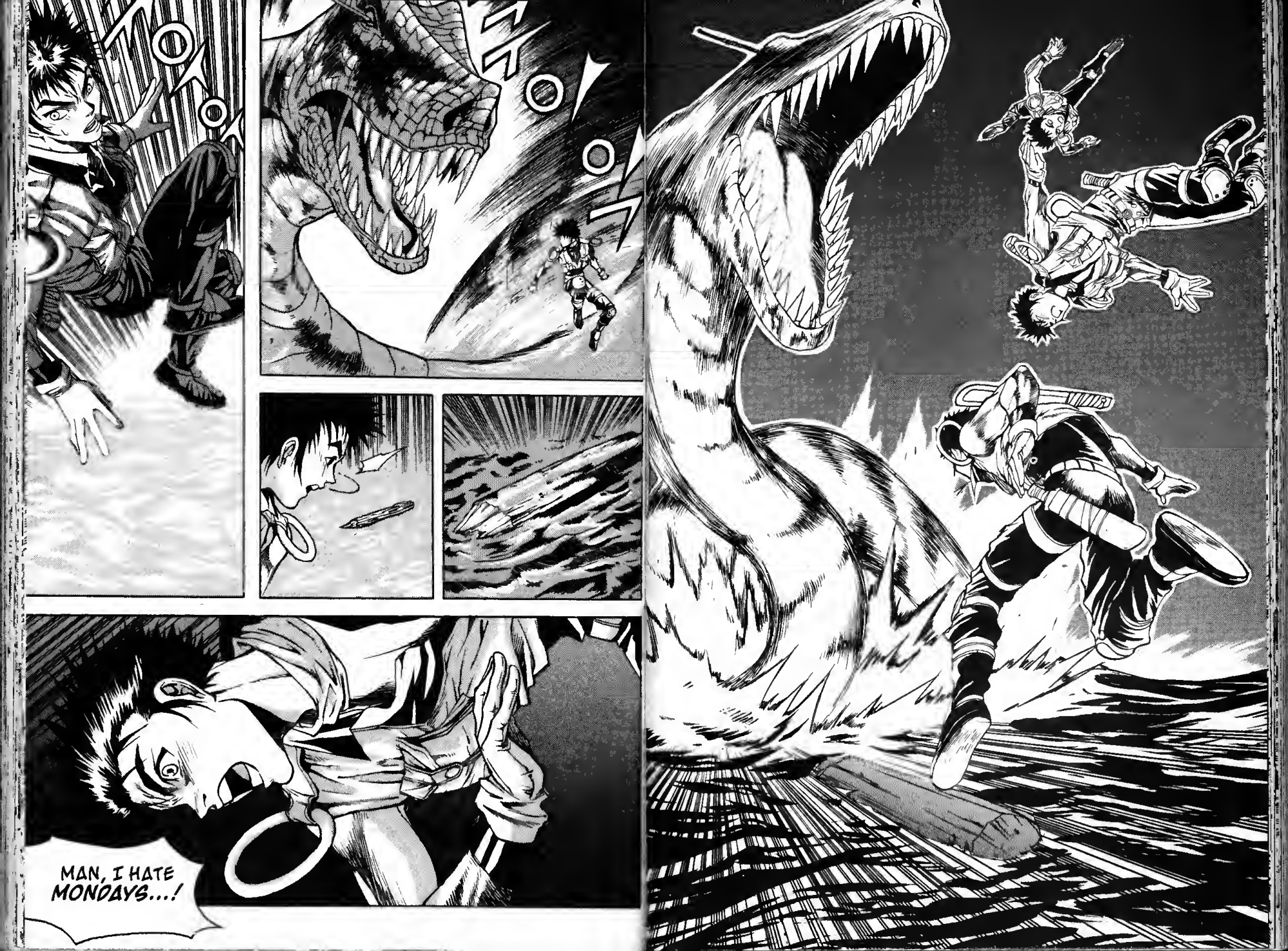
HMPH! I DON'T SEE WHAT ALL THE FUSS IS ABOUT...! BUNCHA GLORIFIED SLUGS! THEY WEREN'T SO TOUGH!

GROOOWL...

HUH? WHAT'S THAT SOUN--

BLADE OF HEAVEN


MAN, I HATE MONDAYS...!

AH YO
OF
OK

WHOO-YEAH!!
THAT'S GOAL,
YOU UGLY BAST--
--URB...?
GLUB?
GURGLE...

IS IT ME...OR
DID YOU JUST
HEAR COCKY
BANTER, TOO?
.....

I WON! I
REALLY,
REALLY WON!

HEH HEH...JUST
LOOKIT YA NOW,
YOU LITTLE TWERP!
THAT'S WHAT YOU
GET WHEN YA
CHALLENGE THE KIO!!
HUH...?

SWEET...
...BABY...
...CORN...

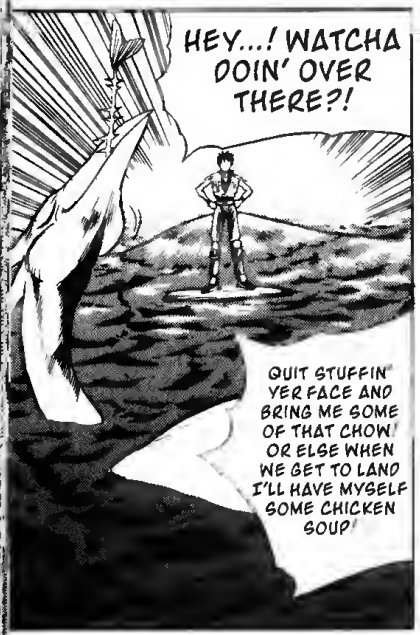
WAAAH!!
MUST...
SWIM...
LIKE...THE
WIND...!!

OKAY, THIS IS NUTS. YOU HAD TO HAVE HEARD THAT PUN, RIGHT?
AMAZING...
IT'S BECAUSE OF THESE STRANGE LITTLE THINGS...
...THAT I'M STILL ALIVE. BUT I MUSTN'T GROW FOND OF THEM...

ALTOGETHER, THERE WERE EIGHT OF THEM.

IT'S REALLY A MIRACLE YOU'RE STILL ALIVE. EACH ONE OF THESE PENETRATED ALL THE VITAL PARTS OF YOUR BODY.
I CAN'T EVEN IMITATE SUCH A DEATH BLOW. ONLY SOMEONE WITH A MASTER RANKING COULD HAVE DONE THAT TO YOU.
IF I WERE YOU...I WOULD HOPE TO NEVER MEET THAT PERSON AGAIN!
DON'T FEEL BAD. SOMEDAY, I'LL REUNITE YOU TO YOUR OWNER...
YOU CAN COUNT ON IT...!!

RAREEROO...! GAGOGARA...!


HEY...! WATCHA DOIN' OVER THERE?!
QUIT STUFFIN' YER FACE AND BRING ME SOME OF THAT CHOW! OR ELSE WHEN WE GET TO LAND I'LL HAVE MYSELF SOME CHICKEN SOUP!

OI

G-GWACK! SQUAWK!!
OH, NOW YOU LOOK TERRIFIED...! WELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME, I'D SAY! FEAR OF ME IS ONE OF THOSE, WHAT'CHA CALL 'EM, HEALTHY FEARS!

DON'T GIMME THAT LOOK! UNLESS YOU WANT SOME OF WHAT I GAVE THAT MONSTER, YOU'D BETTER HOP TO IT!!

Y'KNOW, FOR A MINUTE THERE, I REALLY THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD. KINDA SHOOK ME UP...BUT IF YOU TELL ANYBODY THAT, I'LL PLUCK YOUR HIDE BUT GOOD.
SURE, I'M A RUGGED LEADING MAN ON THE OUTSIDE...BUT MY HEART'S AS BIG AS MY JOHNSO—
PLIP!
RAARGH!!
OI OI OI

KKEEAHROO!!
KAKEEK KAKKAA!
아아아아

YOU HEARD IT THIS TIME, RIGHT?!
!

IT'S COMING FROM SOMEWHERE IN THAT FOG...!

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HUH?! WHAT ON EARTH?!

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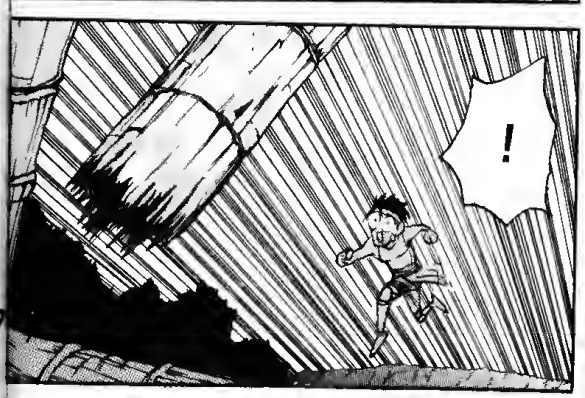
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OUCH!!
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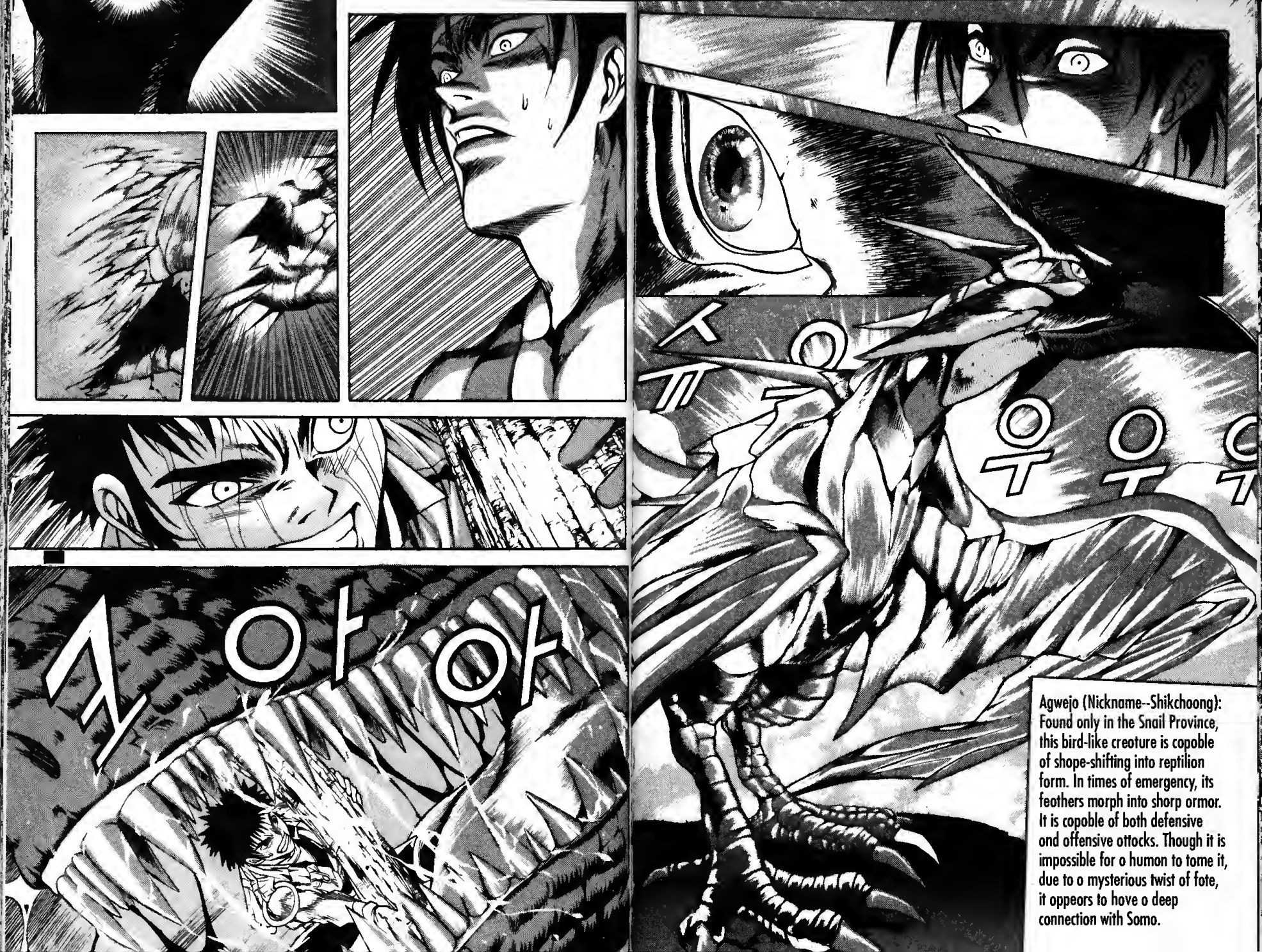
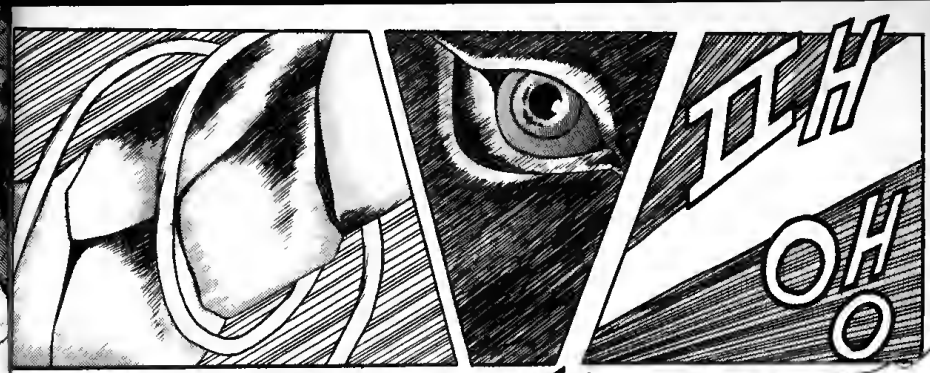

Agwejo (Nickname--Shikchoong): Found only in the Snail Province, this bird-like creoture is copoble of shope-shifting into reptilion form. In times of emergency, its feothers morph into shorp ormor. It is copoble of both defensive ond offensive ottocks. Though it is impossible for o humon to tome it, due to o mysterious twist of fote, it oppeors to hove o deep connection with Somo.

MY GOD...WHAT IS THIS CREATURE?!

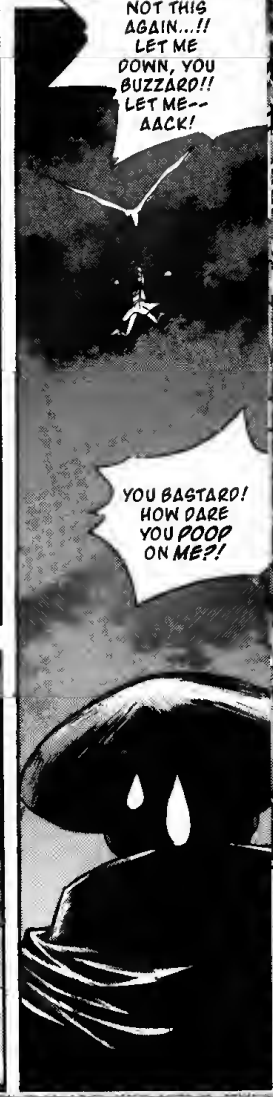
HEY!! JUST WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?!

WHAT...YOU THINK I'M SCARED OF YOU OR SOME-THING ?!

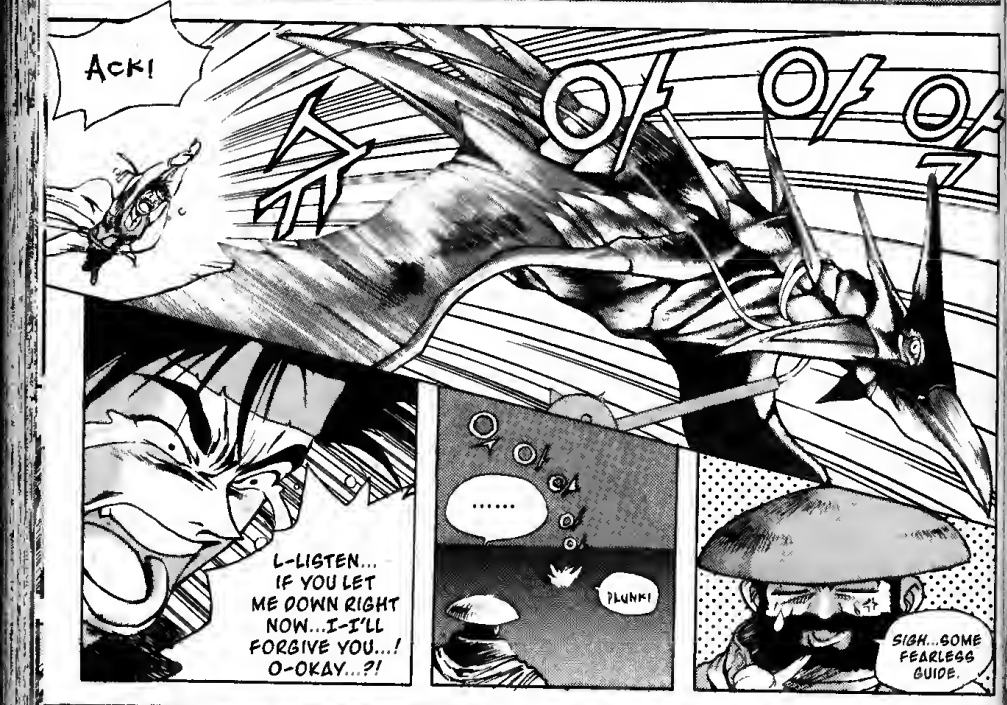


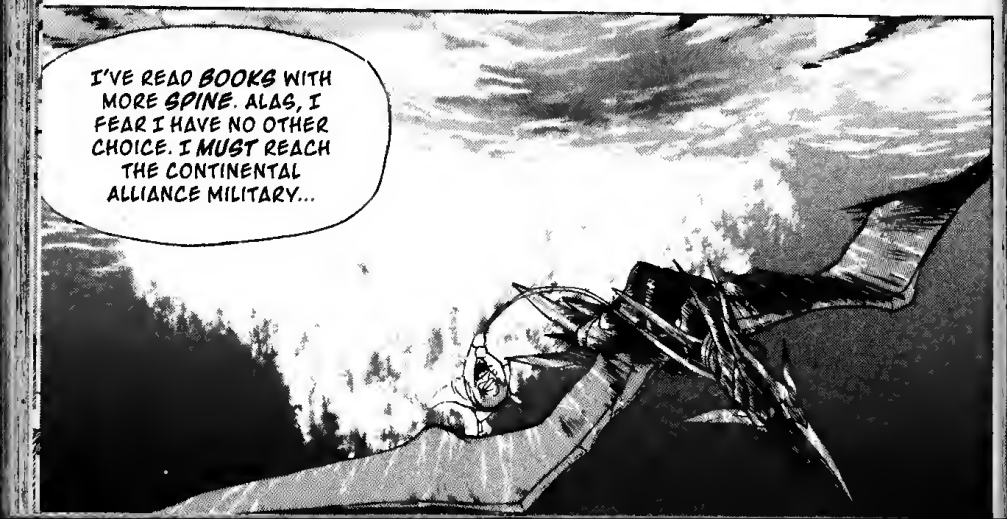
I AM CHARYUKSAN-- THE MIGHTY WARRIOR! AND WHEN CHARYUKSAN WRAPS HIS ROPE AROUND HIS PREY, HE DOESN'T LET--

--GO...?!


NOT THIS AGAIN...!! LET ME DOWN, YOU BUZZARD!! LET ME-- AACK!
YOU BASTARD! HOW DARE YOU POOP ON ME?!

I'M GONNA WRING YOUR STUPID TURKEY NECK WHEN WE LAND!!


ACK!
L-LISTEN... IF YOU LET ME DOWN RIGHT NOW...I-I'LL FORGIVE YOU...! O-OKAY...?!
.....
PLUNK!
SIGH...SOME FEARLESS GUIDE.


I'VE READ BOOKS WITH MORE SPINE. ALAS, I FEAR I HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE. I MUST REACH THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY...

EH...? WHAT BE THAT OVER THERE...?

THE FOG... IT BE TOXIC GAS! ANYTHING THAT TOUCHES IT WITHERS AWAY WITHIN SECONDS!!

YES... THAT'LL DO NICELY.

AS SOMA WOULD SAY--THIS SHOULD BE UPLIFTING!!

WAIT... THAT KID IS...
...SACHUNSA!!
I... I CAN'T... HOLD MY BREATH... ANY LONGER ...

THE...THE SPEAR...

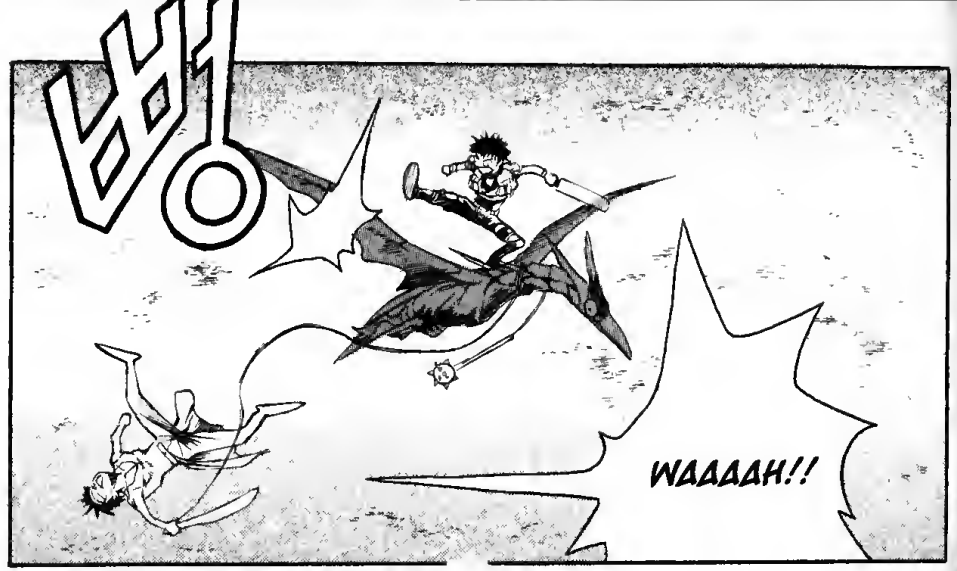
WHEW! THANKS, SHIKCHOONG!
YOU'RE A REAL PAL, PAL!
HUH? WHAT'S THIS ROPE AROUND YOUR NECK...?
GOTCHA!!
PREPARE TO BLEED, BOY!!
YOU AGAIN?!

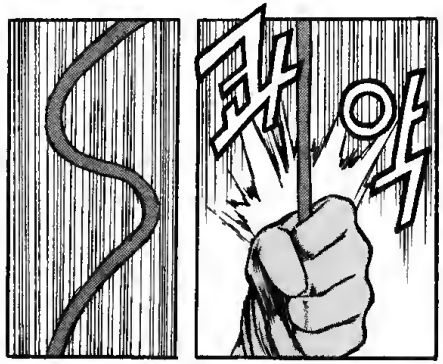
THAT'S RIGHT, IT'S ME, YOU DUCK FART!! AND THIS TIME I'M GONNA GET YOU, MY FRIEND-- AND YOUR LITTLE TURKEY, TOO!!

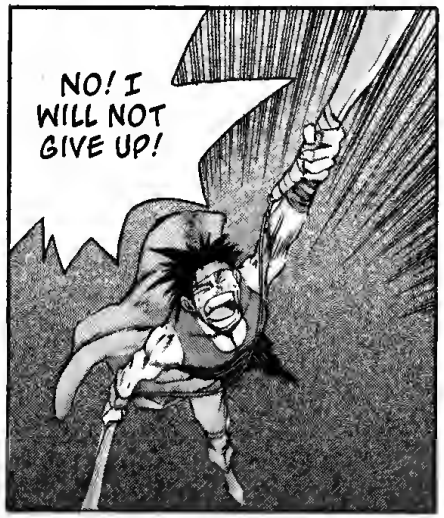
I TRIED TO PURSUE YOU INTO SNAIL PROVINCE, BUT ALMOST CRACKED MY BRAINPAN A THOUSAND TIMES IN THE PROCESS!!
I WAS SWEPT OUT TO SEA BECAUSE OF THE STORM AND SWALLOWED GALLONS OF SALT WATER, FILLING MY BODY WITH GOD KNOWS WHAT BACTERIA!!

I WILL END YOU TODAY!!

NO--!! AGAIN WITH THE SHORT ROPE?!
HEE HEE...!


WAAAAH!!




NO! I WILL NOT GIVE UP!

HE HASN'T FALLEN OFF YET?!
LET GO ALREADY, YOU FREAK JOB! YOU LOST! SO DEAL!

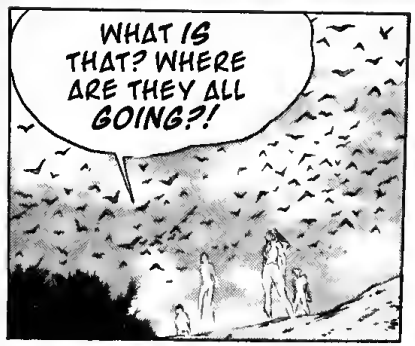
THERE THEY ARE...!

WHA--?!

BLADE OF HEAVEN

CHAYUKSAN, YOU CREEP!! I WARNED YOU TO BACK OFF--BUT NOW THE GLOVES ARE OFF!!

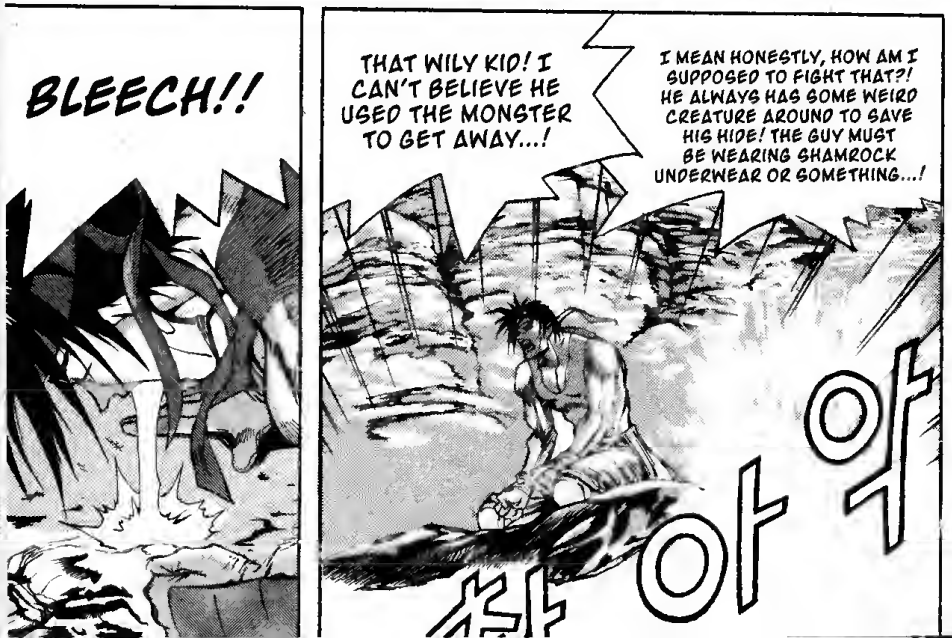
WHOA...!
I DID IT...! I...I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED... BUT...
DID YOU SEE THAT, SHIKCHOONG?!
I NAILED HIM WITH A SINGLE BLOW...!
YAAAH!!
M-MONSTER!! PULL ME UP!!


WHAT IS THAT? WHERE ARE THEY ALL GOING?!

IT...IT'S BEAUTIFUL...

HOLY...! CHECK IT OUT! WHY ARE THE AGWEJOS ACTING SO STRANGELY?!

A SEA OF SILVER LIGHT... THEY'RE LIKE WAVES IN THE OCEAN...
HAS SOMETHING HAPPENED TO HIM...?
SACHUNSA...
?


BLEECH!!
THAT WILY KID! I CAN'T BELIEVE HE USED THE MONSTER TO GET AWAY...!
I MEAN HONESTLY, HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO FIGHT THAT?! HE ALWAYS HAS SOME WEIRD CREATURE AROUND TO SAVE HIS HIDE! THE GUY MUST BE WEARING SHAMROCK UNDERWEAR OR SOMETHING...!
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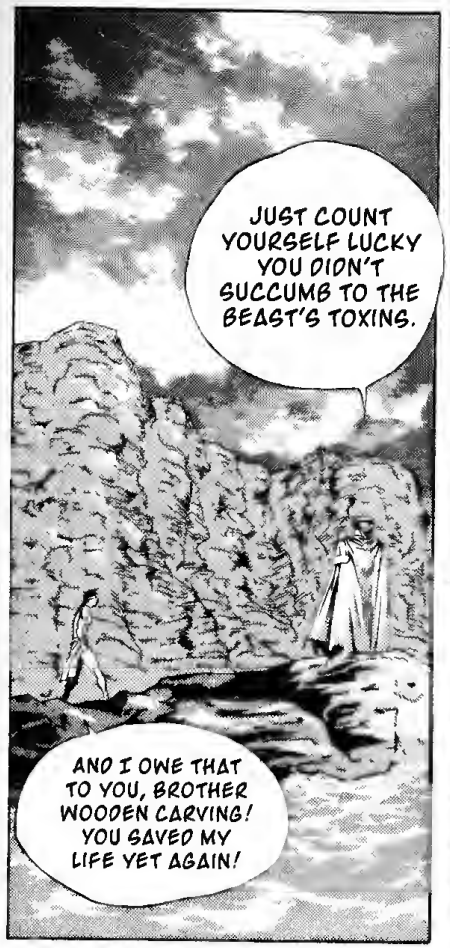
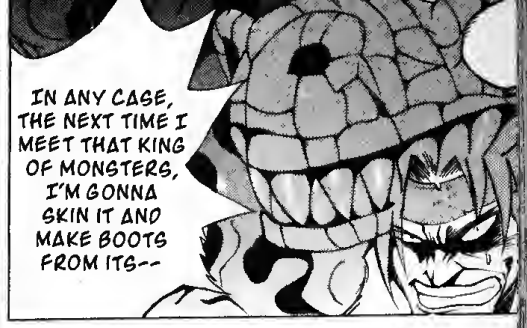

JUST COUNT YOURSELF LUCKY YOU DIDN'T SUCCUMB TO THE BEAST'S TOXINS.
AND I OWE THAT TO YOU, BROTHER WOODEN CARVING! YOU SAVED MY LIFE YET AGAIN!


IN ANY CASE, THE NEXT TIME I MEET THAT KING OF MONSTERS, I'M GONNA SKIN IT AND MAKE BOOTS FROM ITS--

IT WOULD BE WISE IF YOU CEASED YOUR PURSUIT OF THE BOY.
EH? WHY DO YOU SAY...?

YOUR SKILL LEVEL BE NO MATCH FOR SACHUNSA.

AFTER I REALIZED THAT THE FOG BE POISONOUS, I FOLLOWED YOU TO WARN YOU BOTH.
MY VISION OBSCURED, I THOUGHT HE WAS YOU, SO I GRABBED HIM--AND WAS NEARLY KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS WITH A SINGLE BLOW!

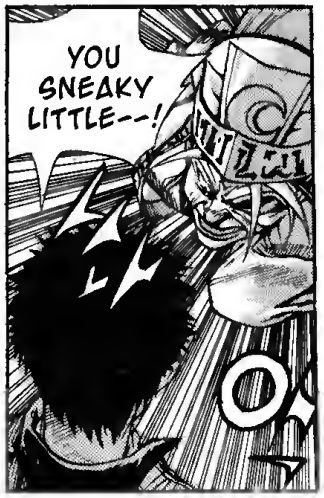
IS THAT ALL...? HA! THAT'S EASY! ANYBODY CAN BE CAUGHT OFF GUARD WHEN YOU'RE SUCKER PUNCHED!
THE FACT THAT I GOT HIT BE NOT THE IGGUE...THE DESTRUCTIVE FORCE BEHIND THAT GINGLE BLOW IS!
HOWEVER...THAR BE ONE TIME IN WHICH IT WAS SHATTERED...
THIG ARMOR I BE WEARIN'...IT CANNOT BE PENETRATED BY ANY WEAPON. TO LEAVE EVEN A SCRATCH BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE.
SHATTERED BY THE GREATEST WARRIOR OF HEAVEN AND EARTH!
NO...COULD HE MEAN...THE LEGENDARY HERO...? IS HE SPEAKING OF... SOMA?!
SACHUNSA BE, AT THE VERY LEAST, THE SECOND STRONGEST FIGHTER I HAVE EVER ENCOUNTERED.
AFTER THAT GREAT BATTLE, MY ARMOR WAS MADE EVEN STRONGER BY WAY OF MAGIC.
SO FOR HIM TO HAVE DENTED IT NOW...PERHAPS HE IS EVEN MORE POWERFUL THAN SOMA.

BWAH!
WHAT... IS... THIS?!
GAH! THE HELL?! DID A GIANT SHOOT A SNOT ROCKET OR WHAT?!
IT'S TOO STICKY...! I C-CAN'T... GET...OUT...!!

CORPSES?!
WAIT...NO WAY! AM I...IN THE STOMACH OF THE DRAGON?!

BUT...WHAT ABOUT SHIKCHOONG...?!
SHIKCHOONG!
SHIKCHOONG!
YOUR HIDE MUST BE AS TOUGH AS MINE, SEEING AS HOW YOU DIDN'T GET DIGESTED BY THE DRAGON'S STOMACH ACID...!
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU? AND WHY ARE YOU HERE? AND DON'T TELL ME "JUST PASSIN' THROUGH," 'CUZ I'M GONNA USE THAT JOKE LATER!
ME...?
HEE HEE HAW!
THAT DEPENDS. WHO MIGHT YOU BE, HMM?
HEY! I ASKED YOU FIRST!
?

WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
EH


YOU SNEAKY LITTLE--!

OI

HUH?! WHERE'D YOU GO?!

SUCH DEFINED MUSCLES...! JUST LOOK AT THE TAUTNESS OF THOSE CHEEKS!

NOW THIS IS A RUMP I CAN GET BEHIND...!
GET IT? GET BE-HIND!

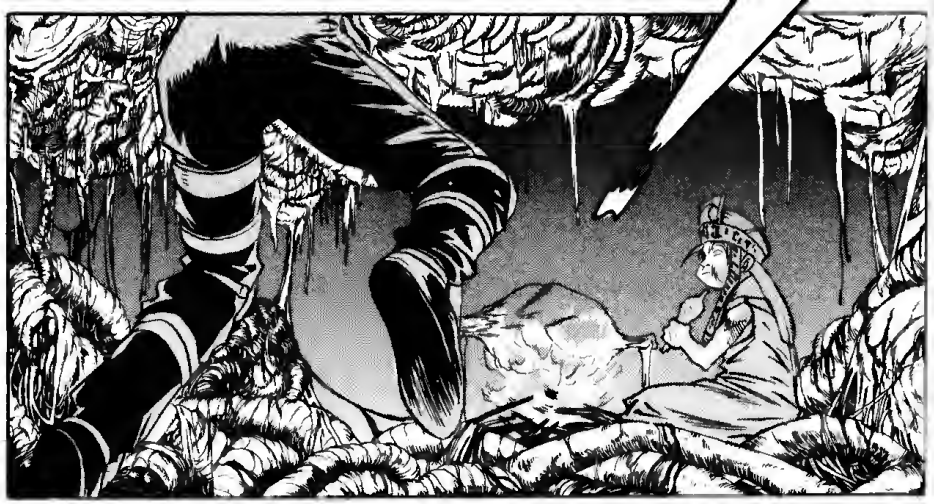
WHY YOU FILTHY LITTLE PERV--!! GET AWAY FROM THERE! THAT'S A PLAYGROUND FOR THE LADIES ONLY!

EI

EECH! BUT ALAS, THE FACE IS A TRAIN WRECK. SHAME...

THAT'S IT, DAISY! I WAS GONNA CUT YOU SOME SLACK AND CHALK IT UP TO YOU BEING NUTS AND ALL--BUT YOU INSULT THE MUG, YA GOTTA PAY!!
EH ...?

HE...HE DISAPPEARED AGAIN!
SO BUSY!
SO BUSY!
...?
AW...I ALMOST BURNT MY MEAL! AND IT'S A NICE MEAL, TOO!
THE BIRD MEAT IS COOKED... NOW ALL I NEED IS SOME ALCOHOL...
BIRD...MEAT?!
COULD HE BE TALKIN' ABOUT...?!
NO WAY!!
SHIKCHOONG!!



HEE HEE! YOU'RE JUST IN TIME! HERE--HAVE SOME!

HOW CAN THIS BE...?

SHIKCHOONG!!

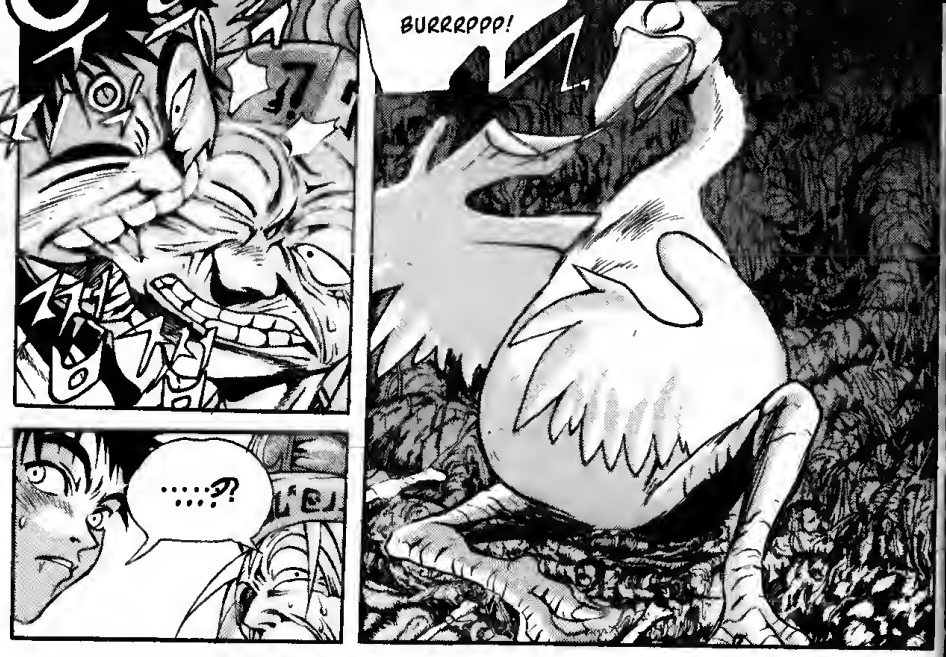
TEARS...? I KNOW MY KINDNESS IS TOUCHING, BUT IT'S ONLY A DRUMSTICK!

SHIKCHOONG!!

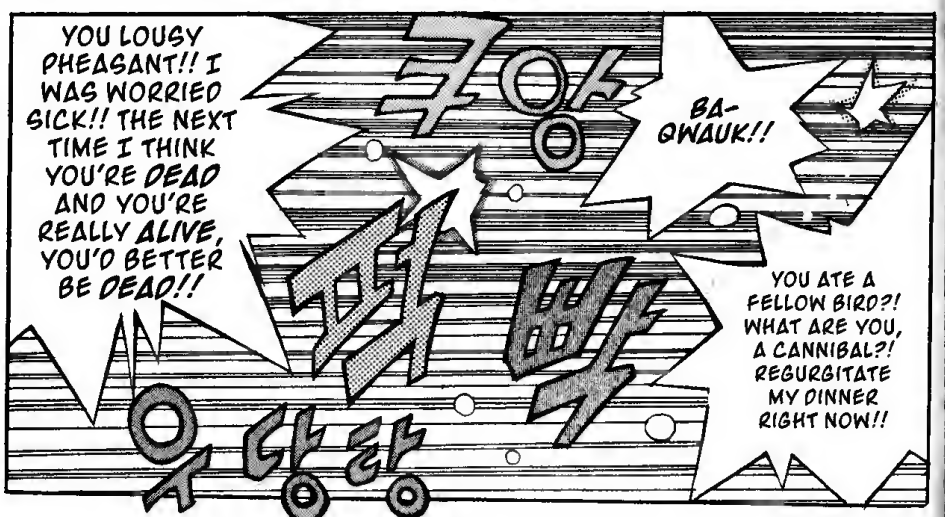
I'M SORRY I COULDN'T SAVE YOU, SHIKCHOONG! YOU DESERVED A BETTER DEATH THAN BEING LUNCH FOR THIS LOONY GEEZER! I CAN ONLY PRAY THAT YOU'LL BE HAPPIER IN YOUR NEXT LIFE...
THE BOY HAS GONE MENTAL! SUCH A SHAME... YOUNG PEOPLE THESE DAYS HAVE SUCH WEAK MINDS...

STRANGE... SUDDENLY I HAVE SHIVERS RUNNING DOWN MY SPINE...

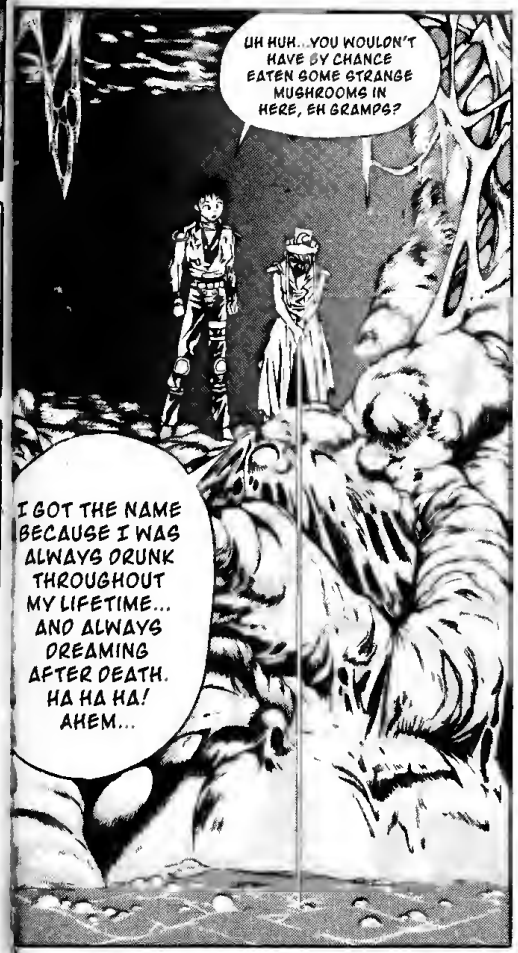
YOU LIKE TO EAT MY FRIENDS, EH?! LET'S SEE HOW YOU TASTE, SHALL WE?!
WHAT'RE YOU--OH MY! OUCH!
DON'T PUT THAT IN YOUR MOUTH! I KNOW WHERE IT'S BEEN!


BURRRPPP!
.....?!

AGWEJO...! YOU'RE ALIVE?!
MY MEAL...! IT'S BEEN EATEN?!


YOU LOUSY PHEASANT!! I WAS WORRIED SICK!! THE NEXT TIME I THINK YOU'RE DEAD AND YOU'RE REALLY ALIVE, YOU'D BETTER BE DEAD!!
BA-QWAUK!!
YOU ATE A FELLOW BIRD?! WHAT ARE YOU, A CANNIBAL?! REGURGITATE MY DINNER RIGHT NOW!!

PEOPLE REFER TO ME AS CHWEESAENG MONGSA, OR DRUNKEN LIFE DREAMY DEATH.
AND I CARE WHY...?


UH HUH...YOU WOULDN'T HAVE BY CHANCE EATEN SOME STRANGE MUSHROOMS IN HERE, EH GRAMPS?
I GOT THE NAME BECAUSE I WAS ALWAYS DRUNK THROUGHOUT MY LIFETIME... AND ALWAYS DREAMING AFTER DEATH. HA HA HA! AHEM...

WELL YOU MUST REALLY LOVE TO DRINK, SEEING AS HOW YOU'RE SITTING HERE BREWING LIQUOR...

HA! THERE IS NO BETTER PLACE TO FERMENT ALCOHOL FOR A MORE FLAVORFUL DRINK THAN IN THE STOMACH OF THE HUMAN FACE FIRE DRAGON!

SEE, IF YOU ADD ALCOHOL BREWED FROM THE GIZZARD OF THE LEGENDARY MOUNTAINS' WHITE BUTTOCK GORILLA, VIPER'S EYES FROM MAGOK, CACTI FROM THE DESERT, AS WELL AS ANT NOSE HAIRS...BREW IT ALL TOGETHER...

...AND YOU GET HUMAN FACE FIRE TOXIN WINE, CREATED BY YOURS TRULY!

YEEE-OOOWZA!! SUCH TASTE! SUCH FRAGRANCE!!
IT'S SO GREAT THAT EVEN IF YOU WERE DRINKING WITH A BUDDY AND HE SUDDENLY DIED, YOU WOULDN'T EVEN NOTICE!!

HMM...DRINK SOME OF THAT INSTANT LIVER ROT IN A BOTTLE, OR LIVE...HMM...THIS IS A TOUGHY...BUT I THINK I'LL CHOOSE LIFE, THANK YOU VERY LITTLE. BESIDES, I GOT BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN GET FELT UP BY AN OLD FRUIT... LIKE COMB MY BUTT HAIR.
YOU SURE...? IF YOU DON'T DRINK IT NOW, YOU'RE GONNA REGRET IT LATER...

WATTAYA SAY? WANT A SWIG?
BARF!

HEH...COCKY LITTLE RUNT. SOON ENOUGH YOU'LL BE BEGGING FOR A TASTE...!

EVEN IF WHAT I OFFER IS DEATH.

WHAT'S THAT VOICE IN MY HEAD? WHY, YOU ASK?
BECAUSE EVEN IF HE DOESN'T WANT IT, HE STILL NEEDS TO DRINK IT...

THAT'S THE UNWRITTEN LAW OF MACHUN SOUTH GATE. A LAW THAT HAS NEVER BEEN BROKEN.

CRUMMY MONSTER GUTS...!! WHERE THE HELL IS THE HEART IN THIS PLACE?!

TINGLE
TWITCH
HUH? WHAT GIVES? SUDDENLY MY MUSCLE'S TWITCHING... AND IT'S ITCHING, TOO!

EEK!

BLURP!
BLOOP!
H-HEY...! M-MY ARM!!

AN UNFORTUNATE EFFECT OF THE HUMAN FACE FIRE DRAGON MUCUS.

THAT STICKY SUBSTANCE THAT YOU PASSED THROUGH IN THE DIGESTIVE TRACT WAS THE MUCUS. WHEN THE HUMAN BODY COMES INTO CONTACT WITH IT, IT STARTS TO DEVELOP STRANGE SYMPTOMS...
BALONEY! DON'T GIMME THAT BUNK! IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN HOW COME YOU'RE FINE AND I'M NOT...?!

HEE...BECAUSE I'VE GOT THIS! HEE HEE!
Y'SEE, THIS ISN'T JUST WINE...IT'S ALSO THE ANTIDOTE TO THE MUCUS TOXINS!

IT IS?! THEN FORK IT OVER!
UH-UH. NO CAN DO.

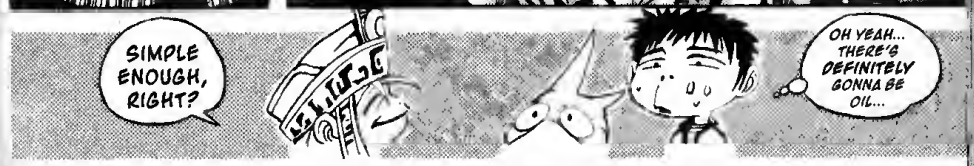
WHY NOT?! EARLIER, YOU ALL BUT POURED IT DOWN MY THROAT!!
TRUE...BUT NOW I'VE CHANGED MY MIND. YOU CAN'T HAVE ANY.

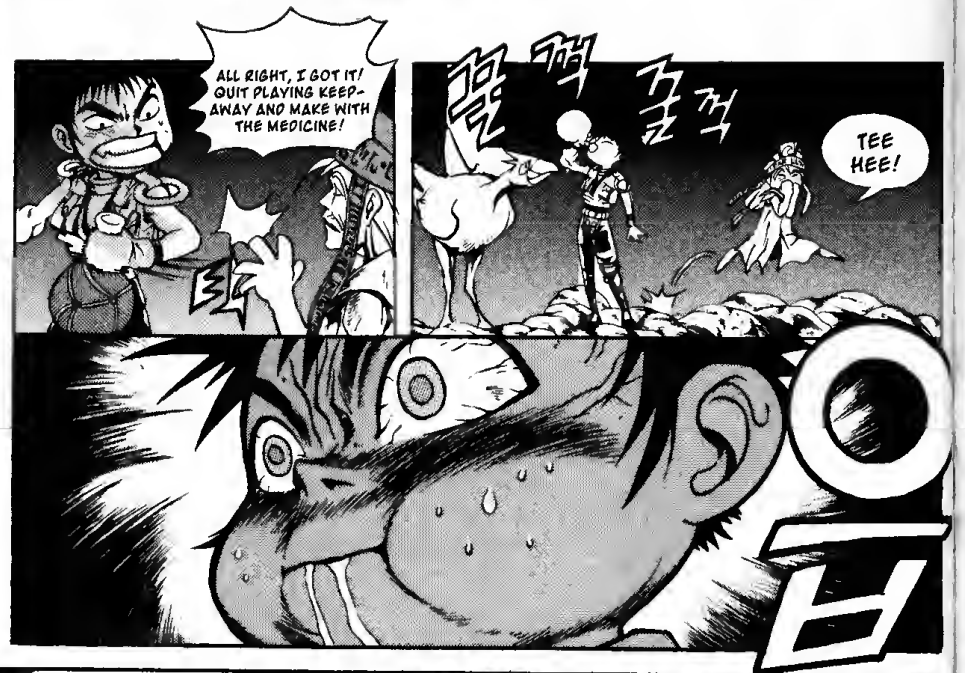
WHY YOU TREACHEROUS OLD MUMMY...! YOU TRICKED ME!

TSK...PITY. I REALLY DO FEEL SORRY FOR YOU... HEH HEH...
BLURP!
IT WOULD BE A SHAME TO LET THOSE MUSCULAR BUTTOCKS DIE...SO PERHAPS I'LL GIVE YOU A SIP...ON ONE CONDITION...!

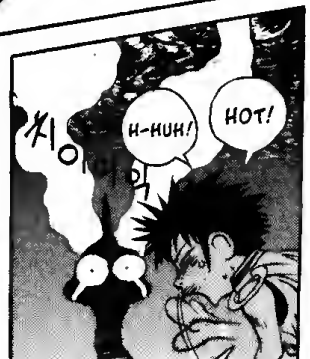
FINE, FINE! WHAT IS IT?! AND IT BETTER NOT INVOLVE MY NAKED BODY, A SAILOR HAT AND OIL!

THERE ARE TWO CONDITIONS, ACTUALLY. THE FIRST OF WHICH IS THAT YOU CAN'T ASK ME WHAT THE CONDITION IS...
THE SECOND ONE IS THAT YOU NEED TO DO EXACTLY WHAT I TELL YOU TO DO.


SIMPLE ENOUGH, RIGHT?
OH YEAH... THERE'S DEFINITELY GONNA BE OIL...

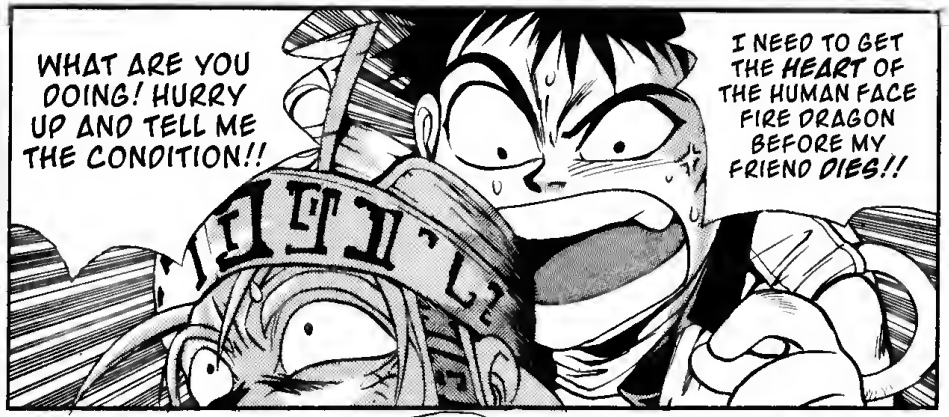

ALL RIGHT, I GOT IT! QUIT PLAYING KEEP-AWAY AND MAKE WITH THE MEDICINE!
TEE HEE!

와아앙


H-HUH!
HOT!
FREAKIN' OLD MAN...!

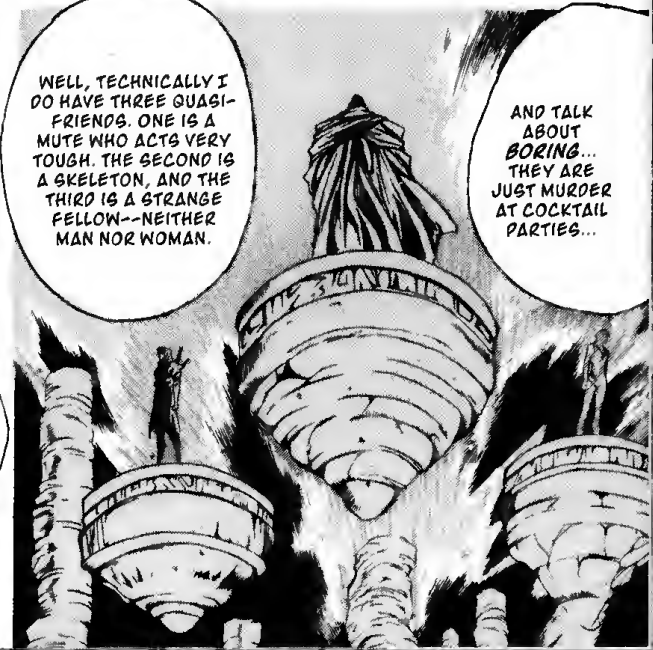
WAIT...SAY...IT MAY TASTE LIKE A SOILED DIAPER, BUT IT SURE IS EFFECTIVE...!
BUT OF COURSE! WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU EXPECT FROM MY LIQUOR? HO HO HO! AHEM...

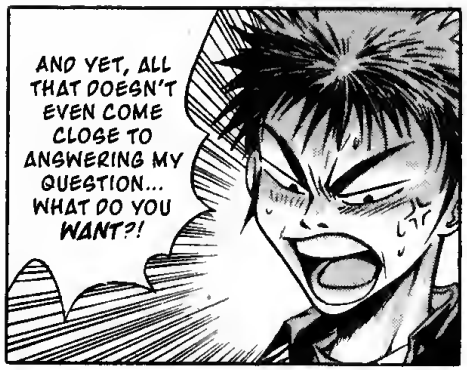
ALL RIGHT...A DEAL'S A DEAL. NOW TELL ME YOUR CONDITION.


WHAT ARE YOU DOING! HURRY UP AND TELL ME THE CONDITION!!
I NEED TO GET THE HEART OF THE HUMAN FACE FIRE DRAGON BEFORE MY FRIEND DIES!!

F-FRIEND...?
FRIENDS ARE NICE, AREN'T THEY?

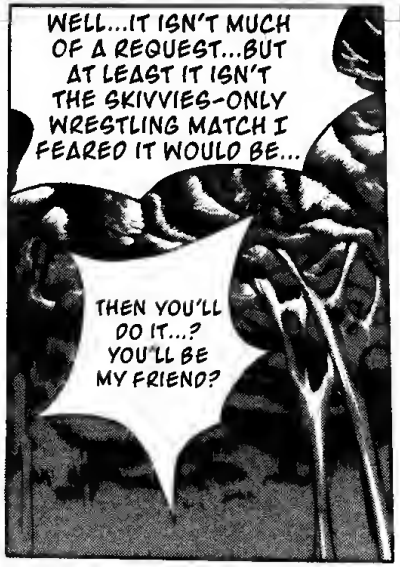
Y'KNOW...I'VE LIVED A LONG TIME...BUT I DON'T HAVE EVEN ONE FRIEND. MY WHOLE LIFE, I WAS ALWAYS SAD AND LONELY...

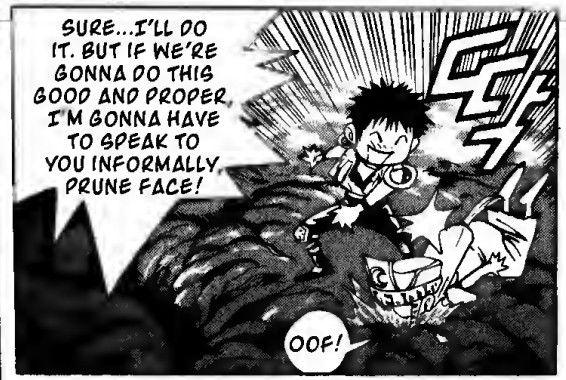

WELL, TECHNICALLY I DO HAVE THREE QUASI-FRIENDS. ONE IS A MUTE WHO ACTS VERY TOUGH. THE SECOND IS A SKELETON, AND THE THIRD IS A STRANGE FELLOW--NEITHER MAN NOR WOMAN.
AND TALK ABOUT BORING... THEY ARE JUST MURDER AT COCKTAIL PARTIES...

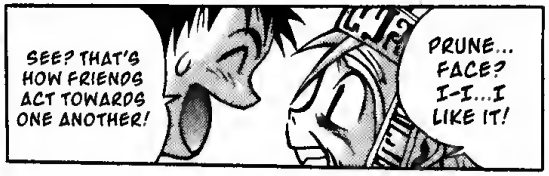

AND YET, ALL THAT DOESN'T EVEN COME CLOSE TO ANSWERING MY QUESTION... WHAT DO YOU WANT?!

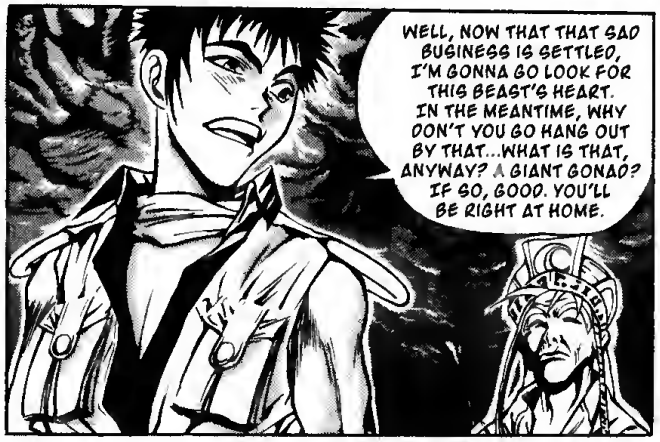
THAT'S MY CONDITION.
?

WILL YOU BE MY FRIEND? HUH? HUH? HUH?
FRIEND... THAT'S IT...?
HUH?


WELL...IT ISN'T MUCH OF A REQUEST...BUT AT LEAST IT ISN'T THE SKIVVIES-ONLY WRESTLING MATCH I FEARED IT WOULD BE...
THEN YOU'LL DO IT...? YOU'LL BE MY FRIEND?


SURE...I'LL DO IT. BUT IF WE'RE GONNA DO THIS GOOD AND PROPER, I'M GONNA HAVE TO SPEAK TO YOU INFORMALLY, PRUNE FACE!
OOF!


SEE? THAT'S HOW FRIENDS ACT TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER!
PRUNE... FACE? I-I...I LIKE IT!


WELL, NOW THAT THAT SAD BUSINESS IS SETTLED, I'M GONNA GO LOOK FOR THIS BEAST'S HEART. IN THE MEANTIME, WHY DON'T YOU GO HANG OUT BY THAT...WHAT IS THAT, ANYWAY? A GIANT GONAD? IF SO, GOOD. YOU'LL BE RIGHT AT HOME.

LET'S SEE... WHERE SHOULD I BEGIN?

ER, UM, F-FRIEND...?

WATTAYA WANT THIS TIME? I'M BUSY OVER HERE, PAL!
I JUST WANTED TO SAY THAT NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU SEARCH FOR IT, YOU WON'T FIND IT HERE.

UNLESS OF COURSE, YOUR HEART IS IN YOUR STOMACH.
.....

OH...! RIIIGHT...! HAW! THEN, YOU MUST KNOW WHERE THE HEART IS LOCATED, HUH?
OF COURSE!

IT'S RIGHT THERE.

?

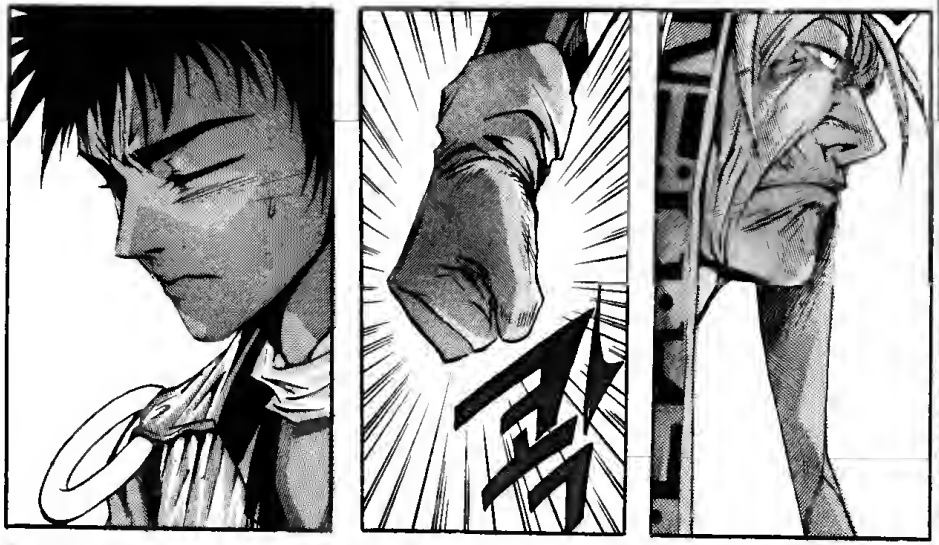
SAAAY...WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?! THERE'S NOTHING THERE...!!
PASS THROUGH THAT AND KEEP GOING STRAIGHT. THEN BINGO, HEART.
REALLY?
WELL WHAT AM I WASTIN' TIME HERE FOR?! LET'S DO THI--

WAIT...! THERE'S NO NEED TO HURRY! EVEN IF DID GET THE HEART, YOU COULDN'T LEAVE RIGHT NOW ANYWAY.

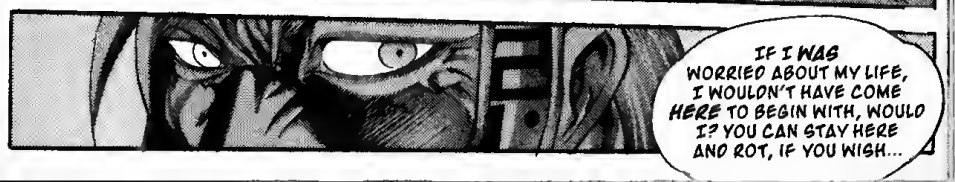
THE HIDE OF THE DRAGON IS SO TOUGH THAT NO WEAPON CAN PENETRATE IT. THAT'S WHY YOU HAVE TO WAIT TO ATTACK IT DURING THE FULL MOON. LEGEND SAYS THAT THE FULL MOON IS FILLED WITH YIN FIRE ENERGY...
...ENERGY THE DRAGON NEEDS TO SURVIVE. HOWEVER, WHILE IT SOAKS UP THE FIRE ENERGY, IT IS VULNERABLE TO ATTACK!

WAIT A MINUTE...! IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN HOW DID YOU COME OUT LAST TIME?!

WELL...EVEN MONSTERS NEED TO EXCRETE THEIR WASTES...! TEE HEE...!



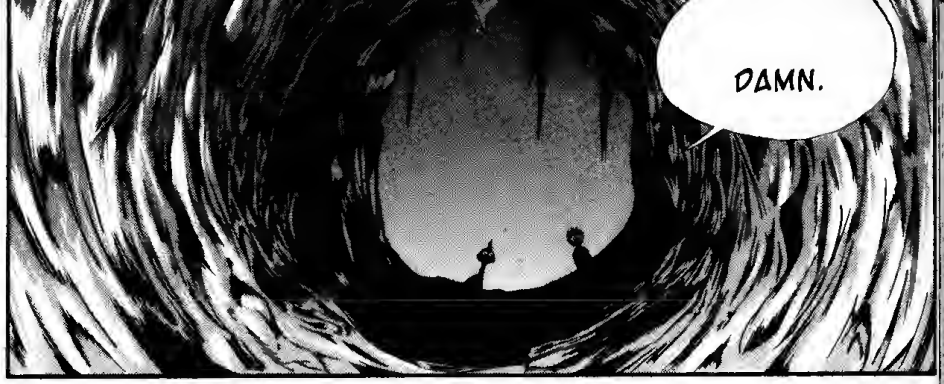
TSK TSK... 'TIS A SHAME OUR FAREWELL COMES SO SOON IN OUR FIRST MEETING.
YOU SEEK THE HEART TO SAVE ANOTHER...YET YOU MAY NOT EVEN BE ABLE TO SALVAGE YOUR OWN LIFE!


IF I WAS WORRIED ABOUT MY LIFE, I WOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE TO BEGIN WITH, WOULD I? YOU CAN STAY HERE AND ROT, IF YOU WISH...

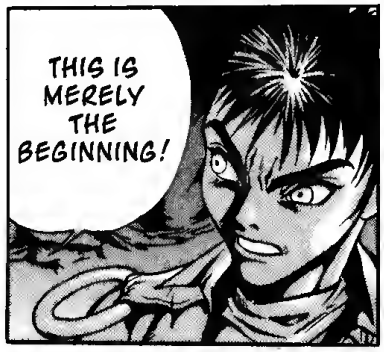
...BUT I MADE A PROMISE TO MYSELF AS I WAS LEAVING SNAIL PROVINCE...
...THAT I WOULDN'T LET HER DIE!
THAT MAY MEAN SQUAT TO YOU, BUT I KEEP THE PROMISES I MAKE.
AS DO I.
ONCE I'VE COMMITTED TO A FRIENDSHIP... THOSE BONDS ARE STRONGER THAN IRON!

WH...WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

LET'S SEE HOW FAR WE CAN GO!!

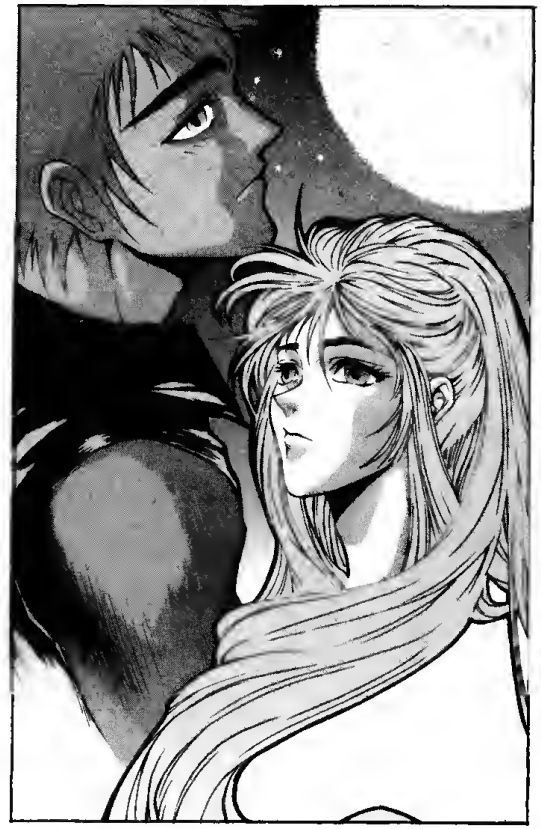

DAMN.

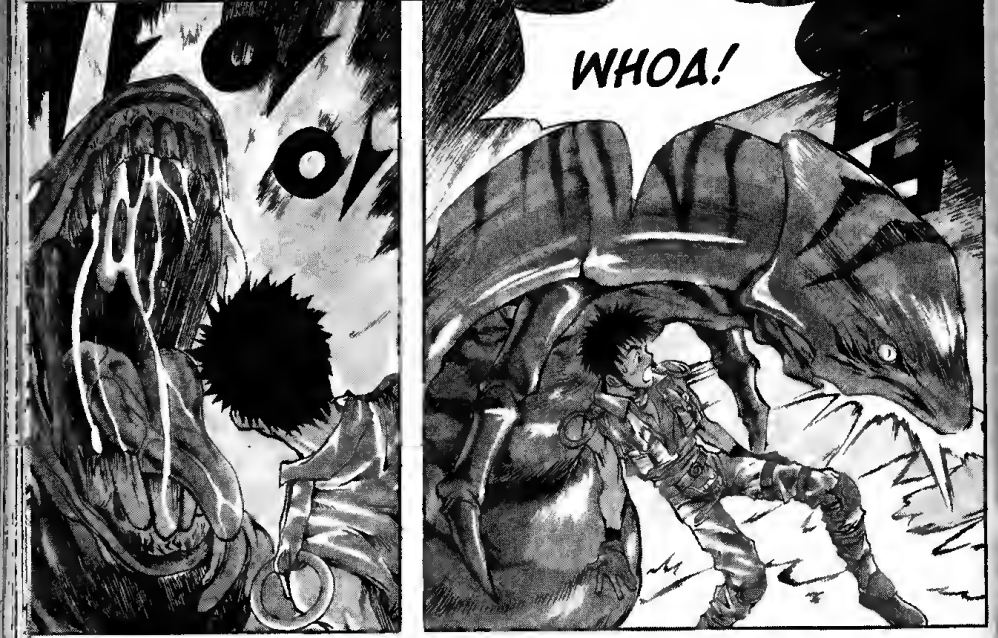
HEH HEH...NO NEED TO BE IMPRESSED!

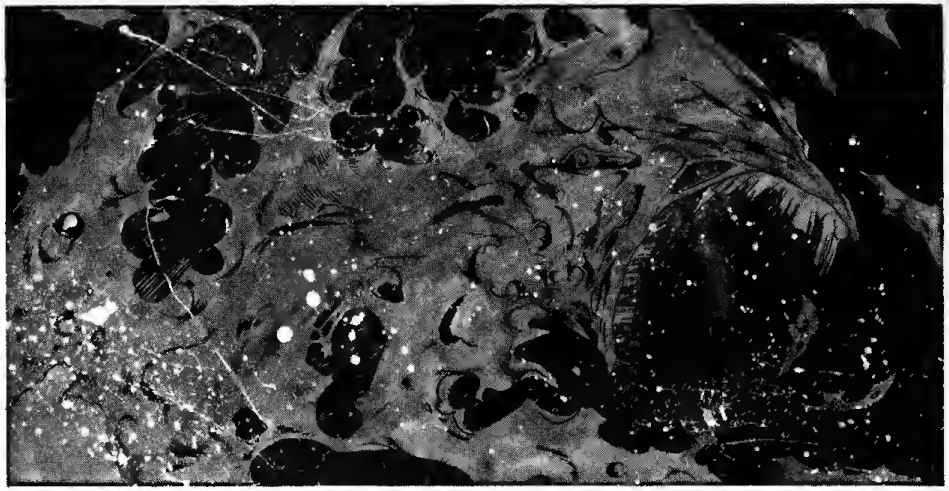

THIS IS MERELY THE BEGINNING!

NEWS TRAVELS FAST, YOU SEE. THEY'VE ALREADY BEGUN TO GATHER...HEH HEH...AHEM...

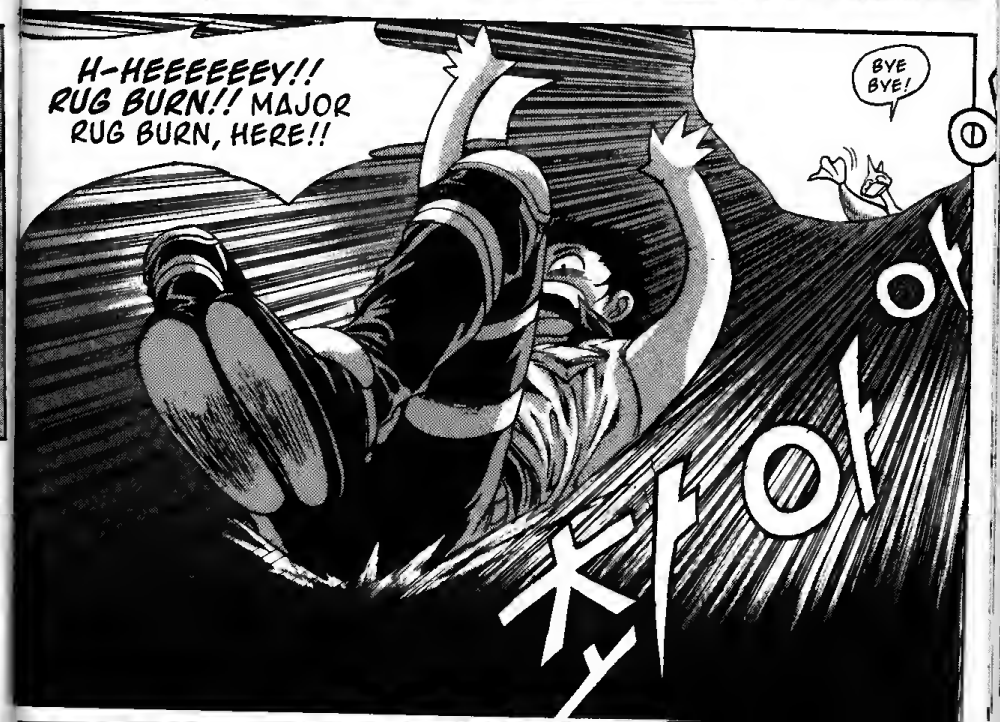
BLADE OF HEAVEN



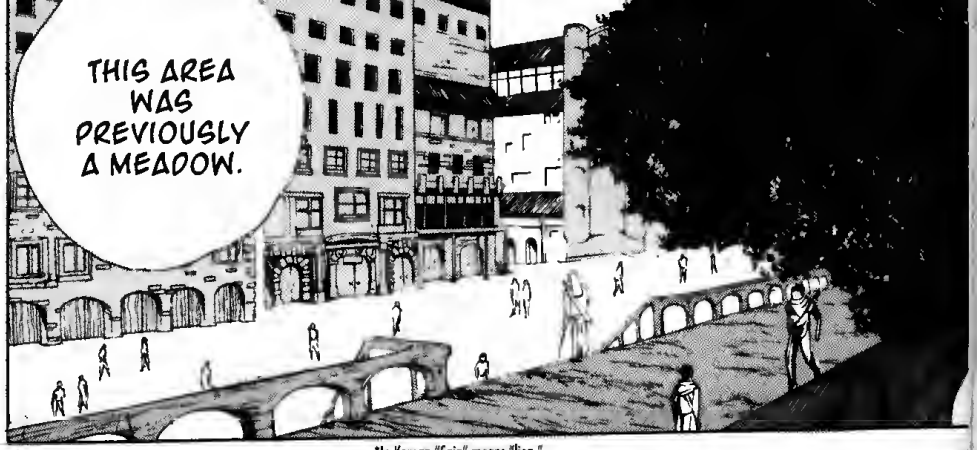

WHOA!



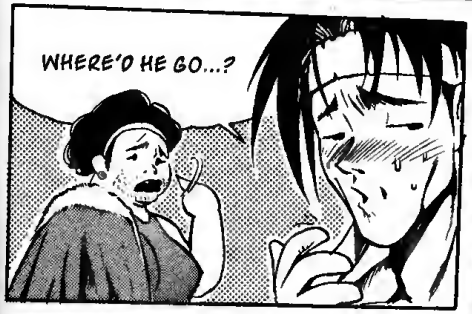
This is a Soma gesture. He always pretended to think whenever faced with a difficult ward.

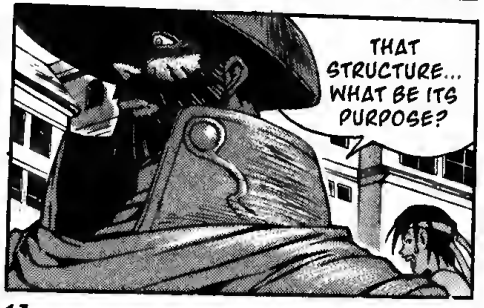


FINALLY! WE MADE IT, MY FRIEND! WELCOME TO THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE MILITARY!!
IMPRESSIVE, EH, BROTHER WOODEN CARVING?



*In Korean "Saja" means "lion."





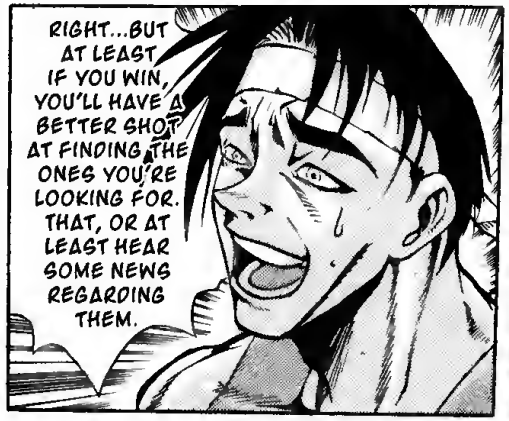
AH...

THAT'S FOR THE HERO COMPETITION.
AND WHAT BE THAT?

IN PREPARATION AGAINST THE LAST BATTLE AGAINST THE DEMON MAJEH, THE COMPETITION WILL SERVE TO RAISE THE SPIRITS OF THE MILITARY, AS WELL AS GATHERING TOGETHER ALL THE GREAT WARRIORS SCATTERED ACROSS THE LAND!

YOU CAN ENTER TOO, IF YOU WANT.
IF YOU WIN, YOU'LL BE AWARDED WITH A HIGH RANKING POSITION IN THE ARMY AND GREAT GLORY!

OH...AND YOU'LL GET THE MYSTICAL SWORD, THE CONTINENTAL ALLIANCE'S GREATEST TREASURE!
I BE NOT INTERESTED IN TREASURE.


RIGHT...BUT AT LEAST IF YOU WIN, YOU'LL HAVE A BETTER SHOT AT FINDING THE ONES YOU'RE LOOKING FOR. THAT, OR AT LEAST HEAR SOME NEWS REGARDING THEM.

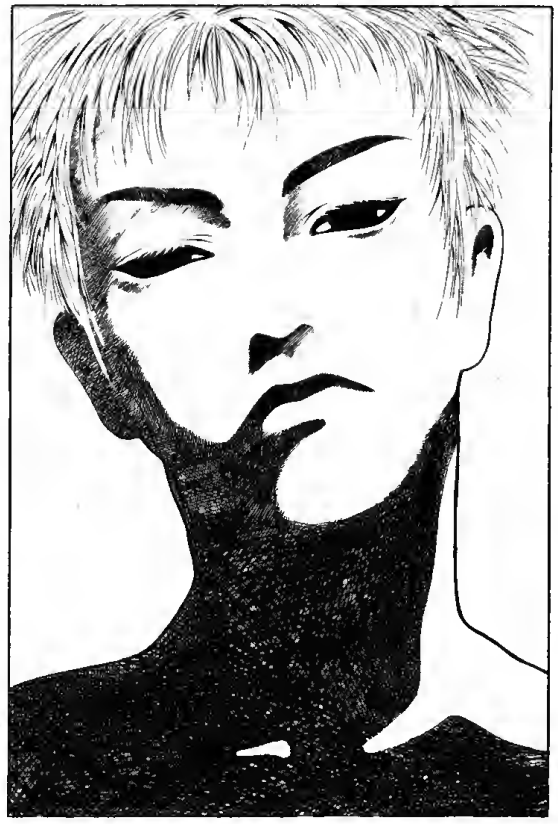
DONG DONG...

I MEAN, YOU CAN'T JUST GO AROUND ASKING EVERY SINGLE PERSON HERE IF THEY'VE SEEN--
WHAT MUST I DO TO ENTER THE COMPETITION?

WELL DONE! I KNEW YOU'D GIVE IT A SHOT! JUST LEAVE THE DETAILS TO ME...!
?

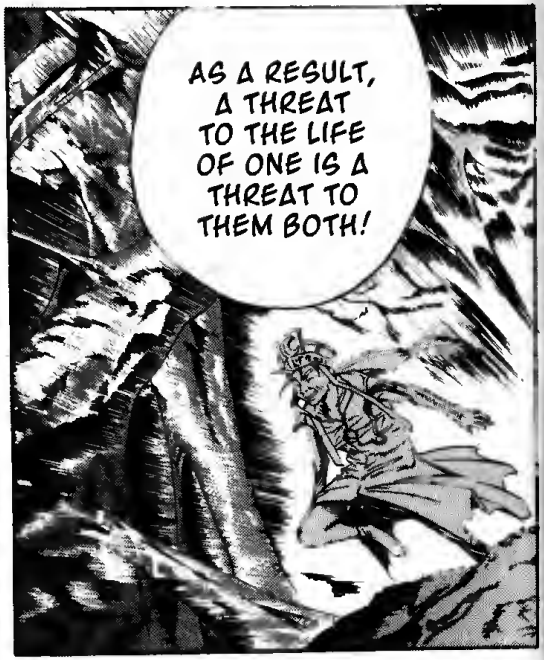
OH YEAH... THAT'S THE KING I WAS TELLING YOU ABOUT BEFORE... SAJA KHAN.
SAJA KHAN!
THIS WONDROUS SWORD THAT CANNOT BE EXPLAINED BY ANY LOGIC OR REASON!
EVEN WITH MY TREMENDOUS STRENGTH...I AM INCAPABLE OF PULLING THE RUSTED BLADE FROM ITS STONE PRISON!
THOUGH I HAVE GIVEN UP ALL HOPE OF BECOMING ITS MASTER...I STILL WISH TO SEE THE ONE THAT THE BLADE CHOOSES TO WIELD IT.

BLADE OF HEAVEN



THEY'RE CALLED GAKCHEE-CHOONG!

AS YOU CAN PERSONALLY ATTEST TO, THE DRAGON IS WEAK WHEN IT COMES TO SUFFICIENTLY DIGESTING ITS FOOD... BUT THAT DOESN'T STOP IT FROM EATING EVERYTHING IN SIGHT!
DEALING WITH THE FOOD THAT HASN'T BEEN FULLY DIGESTED IS THE DUTY OF THE GAKCHEECHOONG! IN EXCHANGE, THEY GET FRESH FOOD... LIKE US...! QUITE THE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP, EH? HEH HEH!


AS A RESULT, A THREAT TO THE LIFE OF ONE IS A THREAT TO THEM BOTH!

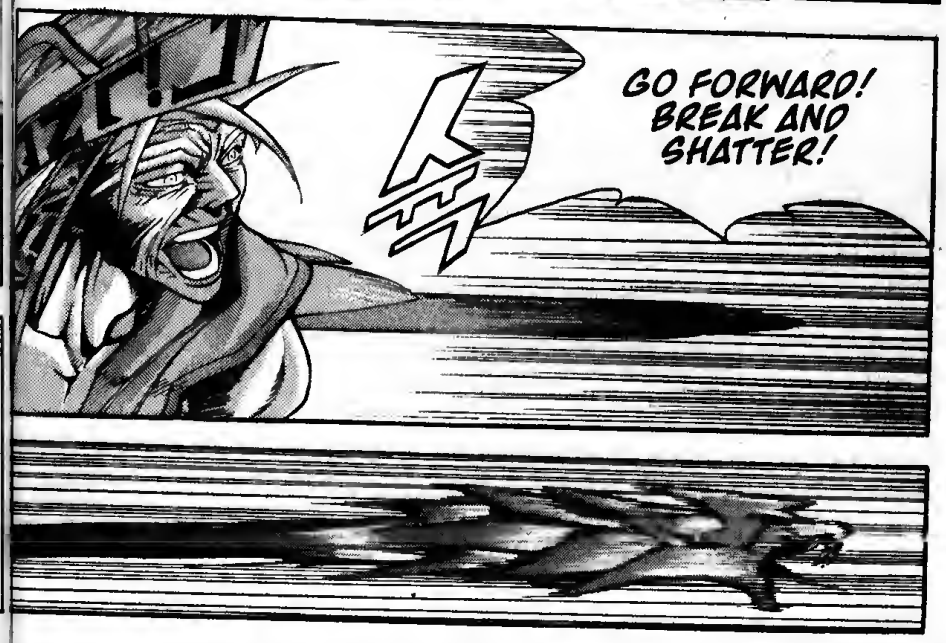
THE CLOSER WE GET TO ITS HEART, THE MORE DANGEROUS THE ATTACKS WILL BECOME!!

THESE CREATURES KNOW THAT THE DEATH OF THE DRAGON SIGNIFIES THEIR DEMISE AS WELL...!

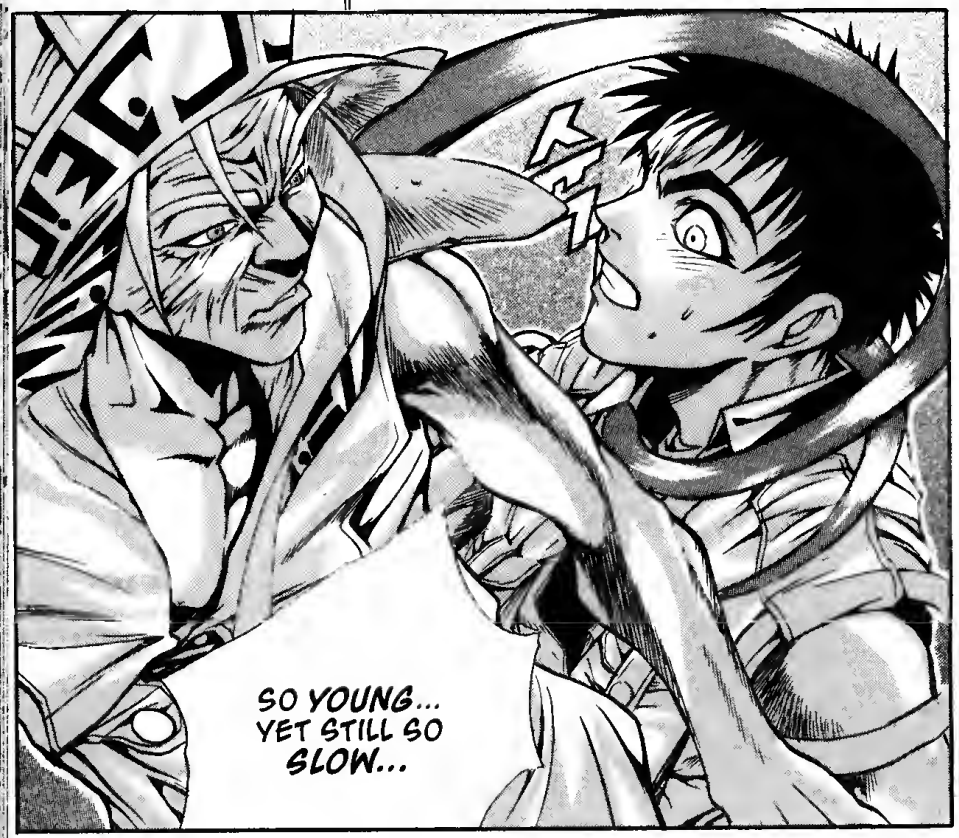
EH...? WHERE'D YOU GO?!

YOU LITTLE TWERPS! LET GO!

UH, MONGGA?!
A LITTLE HELP, HERE?!


GO FORWARD! BREAK AND SHATTER!

ROOARRR!!


SO YOUNG... YET STILL SO SLOW...

HOLY--!! THIS OLD DUDE'S FAST!!

I FEEL LIKE I'M FLYING...!!

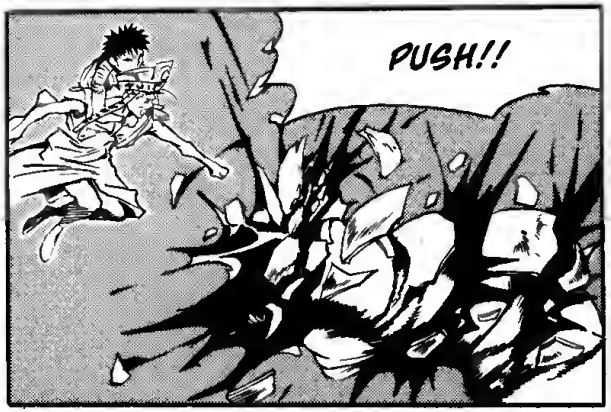
WHO IS THIS GUY, REALLY?! AT FIRST, HE APPEARED TO BE NOTHING MORE THAN A CRAZY DRUNK...

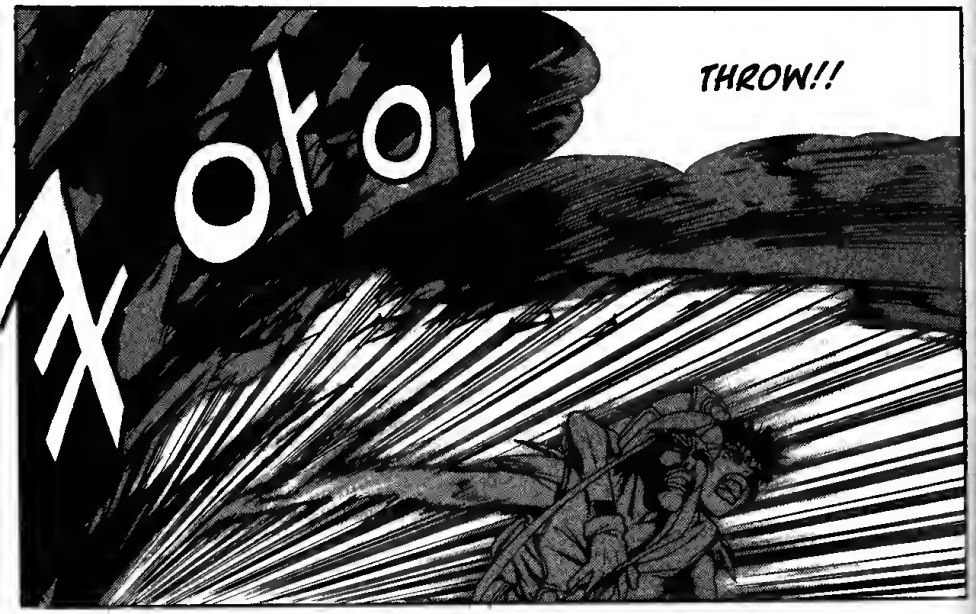
DON'T GIVE ME THAT QUIZZICAL LOOK! NOTHING TO SEE HERE BUT A CRAZY DRUNK!! WAAH HA HA!

HUH?! HE CAN READ MINDS, TOO?!
AND NOW... I'LL SHOW YOU SOMETHING EVEN MORE AMAZING!!
HOLY CRAP!!
THE POWER OF THE WIND COMING OUT FROM HIS HANDS...
...IT'S AS STRONG AS A HURRICANE!!
WE'RE ACTUALLY SURFING THE EXPLOSION'S SHOCKWAVES!!

THE GENESIS OF STRENGTH LIES NOT IN THE MUSCLES!

PULL!!


PUSH!!


끄아아아
THROW!!

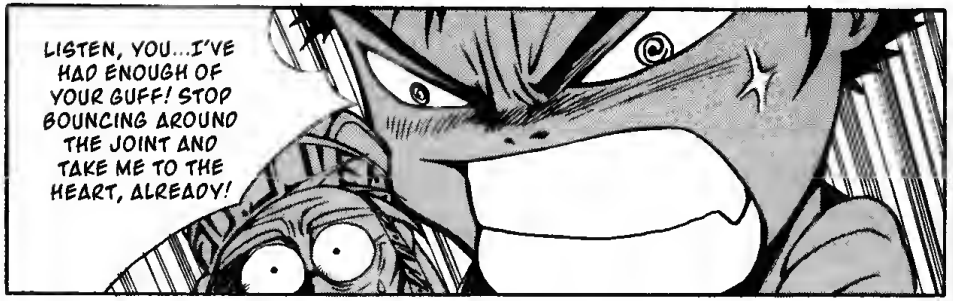
THE MUSCLE IS THE LAST STAGE! BY THE TIME A COMMAND LEAVES YOUR MIND AND TRAVERSES THE COMPLEX ROADWAY OF NERVES TO YOUR MUSCLES...
...TOO MUCH TIME HAS PASSED!!
I THINK I JUST CRAPPED MYSELF...!

SPHINCTER CONTROL IS ANOTHER LESSON ENTIRELY! NOW PAY ATTENTION...IF YOU KNOW THE NETWORK BY WHICH THIS COMMAND IS RELAYED, YOU DON'T HAVE TO PAUSE TO SAY, RIGHT, LEFT, UP, OR DOWN--AND THEN YOU'RE ABLE TO FREELY MANIPULATE IT!

THEREFORE, STRENGTH BEGINS AND ENDS IN THE MIND!

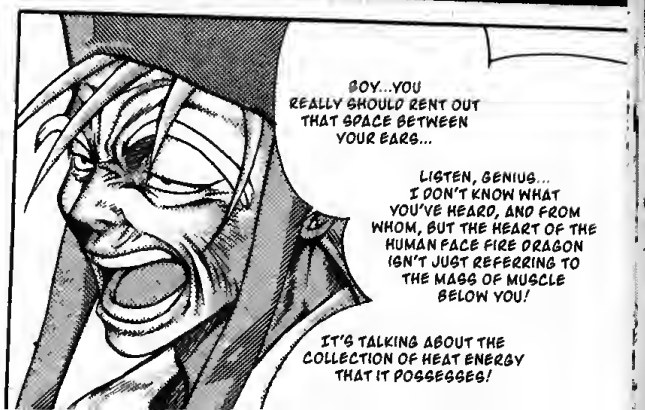
IN OTHER WORDS, STRENGTH, ENERGY AND THE HEART ARE ALL ONE!
GOT IT?

YOUR CHAMPION, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.
PANT!
PANT!

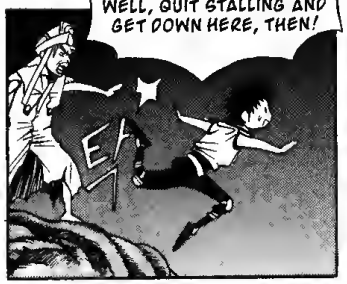

LISTEN, YOU...I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR GUFF! STOP BOUNCING AROUND THE JOINT AND TAKE ME TO THE HEART, ALREADY!

WHY, MY FRIEND... WE'RE ALREADY HERE! SIMPLY CAST YOUR GAZE BELOW...
GOOD NIGHT! THAT THING'S HUGE!!

HOW THE HECK AM I SUPPOSED TO CARRY THAT THING OUTTA HERE?!


BOY...YOU REALLY SHOULD RENT OUT THAT SPACE BETWEEN YOUR EARS...
LISTEN, GENIUS... I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'VE HEARD, AND FROM WHOM, BUT THE HEART OF THE HUMAN FACE FIRE DRAGON ISN'T JUST REFERRING TO THE MASS OF MUSCLE BELOW YOU!
IT'S TALKING ABOUT THE COLLECTION OF HEAT ENERGY THAT IT POSSESSES!

I DIDN'T HEAR ANYTHING ABOUT THAT...

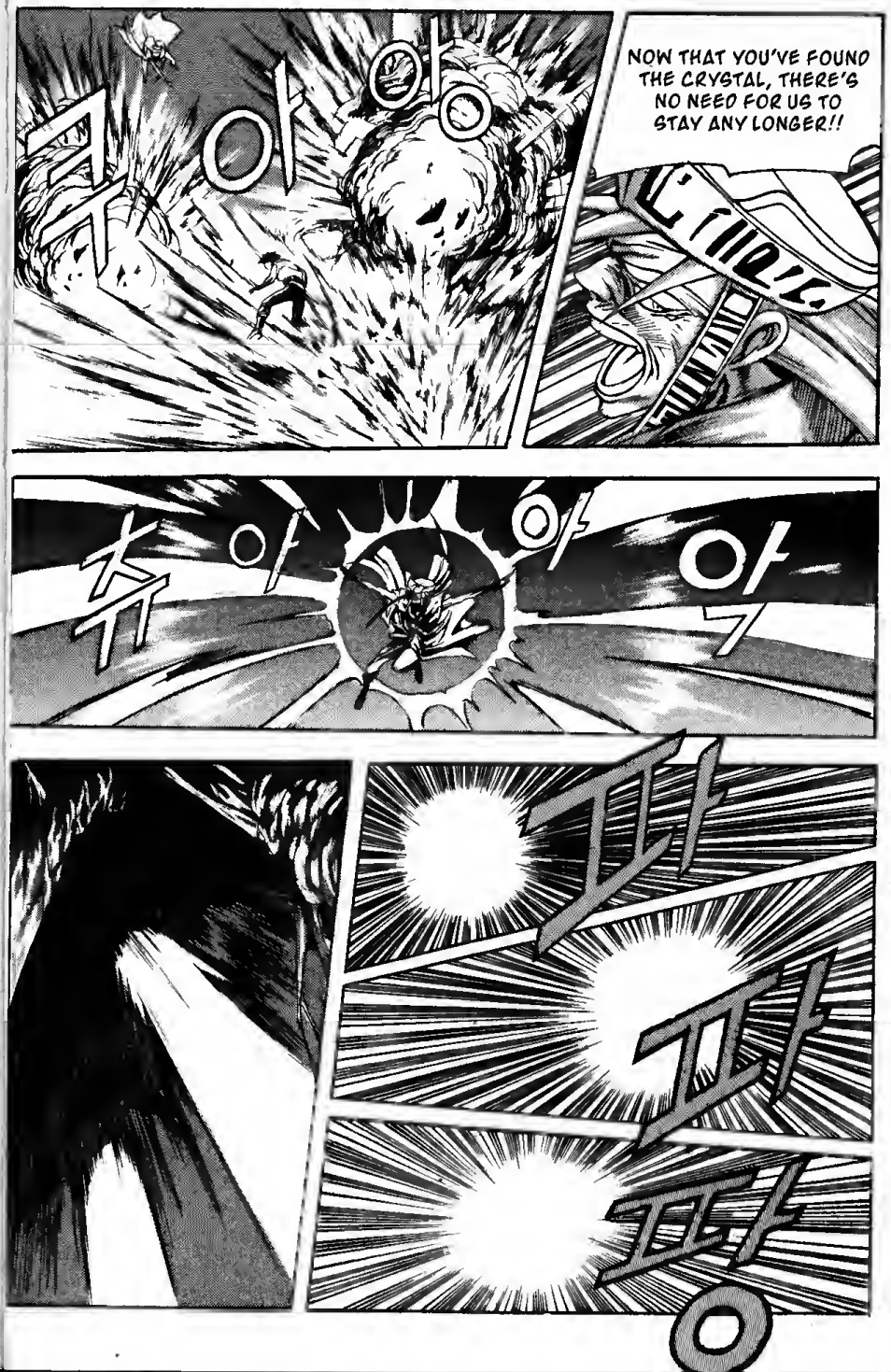

WELL, QUIT STALLING AND GET DOWN HERE, THEN!

FLY!! BREAK AND SHATTER!!

OH
OH
OH
OH

IS THIS THE CRYSTAL OF THE DRAGON'S HEART...?
MAYBE THIS IS WHAT I NEED...?

HUH...? WHEN...?
I TOLD YOU SO!
YOU COULD LOSE YOUR LIFE!!


NOW THAT YOU'VE FOUND THE CRYSTAL, THERE'S NO NEED FOR US TO STAY ANY LONGER!!

Mongsa's foot

MONGSA!!
THAT WENT...A LOT SMOOTHER... IN MY HEAD..
ARE YOU ALIVE?
MAN...I KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN! AS SOON AS YOU STARTED JUMPING AROUND, I KNEW WE WERE SCREWED...!
THAT'S STRANGE...
THE DRAGON'S HIDE IS STRONG...BUT IT ISN'T STRONG ENOUGH TO DEFLECT MY ATTACK!
NOT TO MENTION THIS IS THE TIME WHEN IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE AT ITS WEAKEST... HMM...

Little did they know that outside a life and death battle was being waged! The Agwejas from Snail Province, sensing that Soma/Sachunsa was in danger, began their attack on the Human Face Fire Dragon! In turn, the Dragon entered its attack mode, fortifying its scales with steel--all unbeknownst-to-Chweesaeng Mangsa!

I JUST DON'T GET IT...
UH... WHAT'S THAT?
?
MOVE, BOY!!
GIDDIAP!! FASTER! FASTER!!
THOSE ARE THE FLAMES THAT PROTECT THE FIRE DRAGON'S HEART!!

THESE GUYS AGAIN?! AND WHY THE HELL AM I THE ONE CARRYING US?! YOU'RE THE ONE WITH THE POGO STICKS FOR LEGS!!
THESE BEASTS AREN'T AFRAID OF FIRE, BOY! THEY GET STRONGER THE HOTTER IT BECOMES!! HEE HEE!!
YEAH... IMMINENT DEATH IS A LAUGH RIOT!
THIS WOULD BE A LOT EASIER IF YOU'D GET OFF MY BACK!!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT! I'M ONLY IN THIS SITUATION BECAUSE YOU TOOK THAT HEAT ENERGY CRYSTAL!!
AND BESIDES, AFTER ALL THE TIMES I SAVED YOUR HIDE, YOU OWE ME SOME DOWN TIME!
AND ON TOP OF THAT, I GOT A BOO BOO...!
OH, I'M SOOO SCARED...!

FASTER, MULE!!
I'M GOING AS FAST AS I CAN!!
HURK!
OW! MY SPINE...! IF YOU DIDN'T WANT TO CARRY ME, YOU COULD HAVE JUST SAID SO!!

O
TOO... PRETTY... TO D-DIE...
I'M COMING, BOY!!

HELP... MPH...!
꾸르륵 꾸르륵
C-CAN'T... BR...EATHE...
GRAB MY HAND!!

UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU...
PRETTY GOOD FOR A CREATURE OF SUCH LOW STANDING!
...YOU HAVE PICKED THE WRONG OPPONENT!!

HAAAH!

IN THE NEXT BONE-CRUNCHING VOLUME OF

BLADE OF HEAVEN

AFTER HIS AMAZING ADVENTURES INSIDE THE BELLY OF THE BEAST, IT SEEMS THAT SACHUNSA'S TRAVAILS MAY HAVE BEEN FOR NAUGHT! AFTER RETURNING TO THE ISLAND VILLAGE WITH THE CRYSTAL FROM THE HUMAN FACE FIRE DRAGON, SACHUNSA IS MET WITH RESISTANCE FROM THE VERY PEOPLE HE WAS TRYING TO HELP. IT SEEMS THAT THE LAW OF THE LAND TRUMPS EVEN SELF-PRESERVATION, AND THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR IT IS VERY FAMILIAR INDEED!

GET READY TO RUMBLE IN

BLADE OF HEAVEN VOLUME 9!

quick release by KickTheKitty